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The Bible Year



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THE BIBLE YEAR



Prepared for

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETY OF
MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERS

by

ADELAIDE BEE EVANS

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PREFACE

IN planning for the year 1915, the Missionary Volunteer Department decided to make the reading of the Bible through each year a regular feature of our Missionary Volunteer work. In response to the announcement, a large number enrolled for this course of reading. One Missionary Volunteer secretary wrote, "I find almost whole churches enrolling for this work, and all wish to sign the blank as a help in keeping them at it." One thousand and forty-eight were reported as reading the Bible through in 1915, and two thousand and four were reported as reaching that goal in 1916.

In 1915, weekly assignments and notes were published in the *Youth's Instructor*. So great was the interest among all classes that these helps were published in our church organ, the *Review and Herald*, during 1916. Then an abbreviated course for Juniors was started; and during 1917, the *Instructor* contained Junior and Senior assignments and Junior notes, while the *Review and Herald* published Senior assignments and notes.

Thus "The Bible Year" has become a permanent feature of our Missionary Volunteer work, and it is thought that the assignments and notes will be much more convenient in the form in which they are now presented.

Our young people are called to do a great work for others, but they cannot expect God to speak *through* them until they first allow Him to speak *to* them in His word. In an "Address to the Youth,"

Mrs. E. G. White once said: "In the early years of the third angel's message, many of the believers were young in years; but they learned to study God's word with prayerful earnestness, and as they grew older, they became a mighty power for good. Their knowledge of the Scriptures enabled them to labor for souls in the days of their youth and early manhood. They did not think that because they were young, they could not understand God's word. As they wrestled with difficult passages, and sought God for understanding, light shone forth from the sacred page, and the foundation of our faith was established in their hearts. Later, when these young men met every species of error, nothing could shake their confidence. They were anchored within the veil. Their faith in the Bible was substantiated by a personal knowledge of the One who inspired the Word."

This little book is sent forth by the Missionary Volunteer Department with the prayer that it will encourage thousands of our Missionary Volunteers and others to a more constant and systematic study of the word of God, that they may be built up in the Christian life and "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

M. E. KERN.

INTRODUCTION

THE BOOK OF BOOKS

The Bible is the supreme Book. It not only holds, on its own merits, the first place in literature, but as the inspired record of God's dealings with men, it is also entitled to the highest place in their love and reverence.

The Bible is a personal book. Because He who created man caused this book to be written for man, it speaks alike to the king on his throne and to the untutored savage in the jungle. It is a lamp to guide the feet that stray; a hammer to break, and a fire to melt, the hardest heart; a shield to ward off the assaults of the enemy, a tower of refuge; and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. It brings hope to those in despair, peace to the troubled, comfort to the broken-hearted, and courage and confidence to all who search its hidden treasures.

The Bible is a complete book. It "contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, and the destiny of the righteous and the wicked. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be right, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be open at the Judgment, and be remembered forever. It invokes the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents."

The Bible is an enduring book. “The word of our God shall stand forever.” Says Dr. Cummings: “The empire of Cæsar is gone; the legions of Rome are moldering in the dust; the avalanches that Napoleon hurled upon Europe have melted away; the pride of the Pharaohs is fallen; the pyramids they raised to be their tombs are sinking every day in the desert sands; Tyre is a rock for bleaching fishermen’s nets; Sidon has scarcely left a wreck behind; but the word of God still survives. All things that threatened to extinguish it have only aided it; and it proves every day how transient is the noblest monument that man can build, how enduring is the least word that God has spoken. Tradition has dug for it a grave; intolerance has lighted for it many a fagot; many a Judas has betrayed it with a kiss; many a Peter has denied it with an oath; many a Demas has forsaken it; but the word of God still endures.”

Why Should We Read the Book?

First of all, we should read the Bible *to satisfy our soul hunger*. As we read God’s written word to us, and open our minds to receive His thoughts, He will speak to us as truly as He spoke to David, and to Isaiah, and to Daniel. We need to *know Him*, and we may know Him best through His word.

We should read the Bible, too, because “it touches and crowns all other branches of knowledge,” and because, as Charles Dudley Warner says, “all modern literature and all modern art are permeated with it. There is scarcely a great work in the language that can be fully understood and enjoyed without this knowledge, so full is it of allusions and illustrations from the Bible. A boy or a girl at college, in the presence of the works set forth for either to master, without a fair knowledge of the Bible is an ignoramus, and is disadvantaged accordingly.”

How Should We Read the Book?

Read it reverently. Angels who are ever before the throne of God cover their faces as they sing His praise. We should shut out of our minds all worldly thoughts when we open the pages of the Book.

Read it slowly. Let its truths have time to take root. "Be still, and know," says the Mighty One. Be quiet, unhurried, that you may hear His voice. Only so can you *know* your Bible. "The Bible in the hand won't do; the Bible in the head won't do; but the Bible in the heart means eternal life."

Read it submissively. The Bible is God's message to *you*. Through its pages, He will speak to your heart, leading you into all truth. Come to this reading in a submissive, teachable, obedient spirit, and you will be truly taught of Him. "If any man willeth to do His will," said Jesus, "he shall know of the teaching."

Read it prayerfully. "When you are reading a book in a dark room, and come to a difficult part, you take it to a window to get more light. So take your Bible to Christ." Think not so much of the number of chapters and verses as of your need, and the help which your Father is waiting to send you through His word. And remember that your progress in comprehension of the Bible will be measured by your earnestness in prayer.

When Should We Read the Book?

Read it daily. "I am sorry for the men who do not read the Bible every day," says President Wilson. "*To-day*," is the word of inspiration. "To-day . . . hear His voice"—and every day. Do not miss one, or say to yourself, "To-morrow." What if, for you, *to-morrow* should not come?

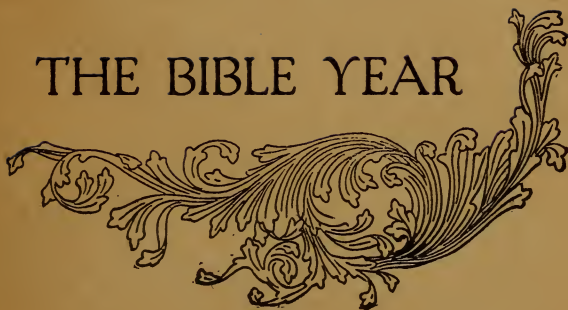
Read it first. "The Bible ought to have the best time in the day; and for most men, the best time in the day is the early morning hour." No matter what other books press their claims

upon your time and thought, do not open one till you have spent some time with the Bible.

Read it last. Come to the Book at nightfall. The day may bring temptation and defeat, toil and weariness, grief and humiliation. Whatever has come, we still need that which Jesus alone can bestow. "Come unto Me, . . . and I will give," is His gracious invitation. There is only one condition — Come. And how better can we come to Him than to sit down for a little space with His word, telling Him our heart's need, and listening to His message to us?

Read it on the Sabbath. How much better we should know the Bible if we read it more upon the Sabbath! And we should keep the Sabbath better if we read the Bible more. Sometimes we excuse ourselves for not reading God's word, on the plea of lack of time; but "there's time to *read* upon the Sabbath day."

THE BIBLE YEAR



THE SUFFICING BIBLE

WHEN I am tired, the Bible is my bed;
Or in the dark, the Bible is my light;
When I am hungry, it is vital bread;
Or fearful, it is armor for the fight.
When I am sick, 'tis healing medicine;
Or lonely, thronging friends I find therein.

If I would work, the Bible is my tool;
Or play, it is a harp of happy sound;
If I am ignorant, it is my school;
If I am sinking, it is solid ground.
If I am cold, the Bible is my fire;
And it is wings, if boldly I aspire.

Should I be lost, the Bible is my guide;
Or naked, it is raiment rich and warm.
Am I imprisoned? it is ranges wide;
Or tempest-tossed? a shelter from the
storm.
Would I adventure, 'tis a gallant sea;
Or would I rest, it is a flowery lea.

Does gloom oppress? the Bible is a sun;
Or ugliness? it is a garden fair.
Am I athirst? how cool its currents run!
Or stifled? what a vivifying air!
Since thus thou givest of thyself to me,
How should I give myself, great Book, to
thee?

—Amos R. Wells.

THE BIBLE YEAR

First Week: January 1-7

1. Gen. 1-3: Creation; sin; salvation.
2. Gen. 4-7: Enoch; Noah; the ark and the Flood.
3. Gen. 8-11: A new beginning; Babel.
4. Gen. 12-15: A man of faith; tithing; the covenant.
5. Gen. 16-19: Lot delivered; Sodom destroyed.
6. Gen. 20-22: Abraham's faith tested.
7. Gen. 23-25: Marriage of Isaac; Jacob and Esau.

How the Bible Received Its Name

The Bible is the literature of a race,—“the chosen literature of the chosen writers of the chosen nation.” We are in the habit of thinking of the Bible as one book; but really it is a good-sized library, with sixty-six books, written by many different men, of varied degrees of education and widely divergent surroundings and occupations, during a time period extending from the days of Moses to near the close of the first century after Christ. However, the singular form of both the words “Bible” and “Scripture” “emphasizes the fact that, under the diversity of human authorship, there lies a wonderful unity, pointing to the operation of one directing Mind, which acted during more than a thousand consecutive years when these writings were being produced.”

The name “Bible,” meaning “the books,” is found nowhere in the Scripture itself. It comes to us from the Latin *biblia* (books), which, in turn, came from the Greek *biblia*, the plural of *biblion*, which is the diminutive of *biblos*. The reason the Greeks called a book *biblos* (the singular form) was because the ancient books were written on material made from the biblus, or papyrus, reed. Just as we speak of the printed sheets of paper with the news printed on them as “the paper,” so they spoke of a scroll of biblus sheets with writing on them as “the biblos,” and a number of them would be *biblia* (plural).

It is thought that the Greek word for the name “Bible” was first applied to the sacred writings by John Chrysostom, patriarch of Constantinople from A. D. 398 to 404.

The Old Testament Canon

We find the name "Old Testament" first used in 2 Cor. 3: 14, where it refers to the old covenant given to Israel, and to the sacred books connected with it. To Ezra and his associates is generally attributed the work of first collecting and arranging the books of the Old Testament canon, about 457 B. C. A few books may have been added later.

It is interesting to note how the word "canon" came to be applied to the books of the Bible. Martin Anstey says: "The word 'canon' means a rod, a rule, a standard, an authority. As applied to the books of the Old and New Testaments, it indicates that these writings and these alone constitute an exhaustive and an authoritative expression of the mind of God, an objective standard or rule of faith, and a final court of appeal, valid for all time in all matters pertaining to life and salvation. The word 'canon,' as applied to the books of the Bible, indicates that these books are to be clearly distinguished, and definitely marked off, from all other literature as being of divine origin, and possessing divine authority."

Great Versions of the Bible

The first copies of the Scriptures were, of course, in manuscript form, and written, for the most part, in the Hebrew. Three small portions were written in Aramaic.

The Septuagint.—The first complete translation of the Old Testament into another language is the Greek version, known as the Alexandrian Version, or the Septuagint. "Septuagint" is a Latin word meaning "seventy;" and the Greek translation was so called because, according to tradition, it was the work of seventy Jewish scholars at Alexandria, in Egypt. It was made sometime between the years 250 and 150 B. C., probably for the benefit of the thousands of Jews living away from Palestine, who had adopted the Greek, at that time the leading language of the world. Scholars agree that "this Greek translation is a very free one, departing in many cases from the original Hebrew text, to which the Jew held so tenaciously and with such reverent awe."

The Vulgate.—England's first Bible was the Vulgate. Sidney Collett says: "In the second century of the Christian era, Latin superseded Greek, and remained for many years the diplomatic language of Europe. At this time, a Latin trans-

lation was made in North Africa from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and the original Greek of the New, so that all Latin-speaking people might be able to read the word of God. It is known as the 'Vulgate,' which itself is a Latin word, meaning 'to make common or public.' "

The Douay Bible.—In the fourth century A. D., the Vulgate was revised by Jerome, a Latin scholar who had access to ancient Hebrew manuscripts, long since lost. From it was made the Roman Catholic Bible now known as the Douay version, but called, at first, the Douay-Rhemish Bible, for the reason that the Old Testament was translated at Douay, a university town in northern France, and the New Testament at Rheims. It was printed in English at Douay in 1609-10.

The First English Bible.—The Venerable Bede translated the Psalms and the Gospels into the Anglo-Saxon tongue in the eighth century, but it was not till 1382 that the first *complete* translation of the Bible in the English language was made. This translation, by John Wycliffe, was never printed; but many written copies were made and circulated, some of which are in existence to-day. To make a single copy required about ten months.

The First Printed English Bible.—In 1525, William Tyndale completed a translation of the New Testament, and despite almost insurmountable difficulties and severe persecution, had it published. This was the first printed New Testament. "In all, at least fifteen thousand copies were issued, which were secretly imported into England in bales of cloth, sacks of flour, etc." Many copies were seized and burned; and in October, 1536, Tyndale himself was strangled and burned at the stake. His work was carried on by Miles Coverdale, who in 1535 first gave to the world the whole Bible in printed form.

The Authorized Version.—The Authorized Version of the Bible, commonly in use at the present time, was made under the direction of King James I, of England, and is often called the King James Version. The work of translation was done by fifty-four men, "including High Churchmen, Puritans, and the best scholars in the land," and was completed and published in 1611. "The beautiful and stately language of the Authorized Version so endeared itself to English-speaking people all over the world that it remained the Bible of the people for nearly three centuries." In this version, marginal references were used on a large scale for the first time.

The Revised Version.—There are two recent revisions of the Scriptures, the English Revised Version and the American Revised Version. The discovery of a number of ancient manuscripts, and a more accurate knowledge of the original texts, made a revision seem desirable; and in 1870, the work was undertaken by nearly one hundred men, the best who could be chosen for the purpose. In 1885, the English Revised Version was published, and the committee having that work in charge was disbanded. The American committee continued its study; and in 1901, the American Standard Revised Bible was published.

A study of the different versions of the Bible, and of the sacred manuscripts still in existence, is fascinating. Read what is said about them in your Bible dictionary.

Second Week: January 8-14

8. Gen. 26, 27: Jacob deceives Isaac.
9. Gen. 28-30: Vision of angels; marriage of Jacob.
10. Gen. 31-33: A changed heart and a changed name.
11. Gen. 34-36: God's covenant renewed to Jacob.
12. Gen. 37-39: From sonship to slavery.
13. Gen. 40-42: From prison to palace.
14. Gen. 43-45: Sorrow turned to joy.

The Book of Genesis

By the Hebrews, this book was called by its first word, *B'reshith*, which means "In the beginning." The name "Genesis" is a Greek word, first used in the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Scriptures, and means creation, origin, beginning. Genesis is the Book of Beginnings. It tells of "the origin, (1) of the universe, including the earth and the human race; (2) of the fundamental human institutions, including the family, church, and government; (3) of human history, including sin and redemption; and (4) of the nations, including the chosen family and race." The book of Genesis "may therefore be considered as the historical foundation, without which the subsequent history of the covenant people would be incomplete and unintelligible."

We may think of Genesis as containing the histories of three families: Adam's (chapters 1-5); Noah's (6-11); and Abraham's (12-50).

Another simple plan for outlining the book calls chapters 1 to 11: 26 Primeval History, and the remainder Patriarchal History.

Still another divides the contents of the book into three parts, thus: Creation (1, 2); The Fall (3-11); Redemption (12-50).

It has also been suggested that the construction of the book of Genesis demands eleven chapters instead of fifty, each one, except the first, beginning, "These are the generations of." One great purpose of the book is to reveal a line of descendants from which the Messiah, the promised Seed, should spring. "That is one of the great things that unifies the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It is a component cord of blue and crimson that runs all through the Book, and binds together in a glorious necklace all the promises in God's word."

The first eleven chapters cover in a very brief way more than one third of the history of the world since creation. Then the history of the chosen people is taken up more in detail. "The plan of the writer was, evidently, to connect the history of Israel with the larger history of mankind; and the method followed was that of continually passing from a wider to a narrower field, until at last the history of Jacob-Israel was reached. Thus he passed from the universe (chapter 1) to mankind (Adam); from mankind to the line of Noah; from the sons of Noah to one line, Shem; from all the Shemites to the line of Terah-Abraham; from all of Abraham's line to that of Isaac; and from the story of Jacob and Esau (the line of Isaac) to that of Jacob alone."

The book of Genesis covers a time period of 2,369 years, or more than all the other books of the Bible put together. "Its fifty chapters would thus describe, on the average, the events of this world's history at the rate of about two chapters for each hundred years. Brief indeed is the record! It is as if two or three such chapters should cover the history of the world since the Revolution."

The book of Genesis has one supreme purpose,—to reveal God as the Creator, and His Son, the Seed, as the Saviour of mankind.

The Biographies of Genesis

The book of Genesis contains one of the most fascinating collections of biographies to be found anywhere. Some of these biographies are better known, and have more strongly influenced the world for good, than the lives of the greatest men of history outside the Bible record. The account of the life of Enoch, brief though it is, shows that evil surroundings need not hinder godly living. He is a type, too, of those who at the close of human history will live pure lives in a corrupt world, and who, like him, will not know death. Noah, a "preacher of righteousness," is an example of loyal steadfastness of purpose in giving an unpopular message to an unheeding, careless people. The faith of Abraham, "the friend of God," has been a strength to Christians in every age. The selfishness of Lot, and the destruction that overtook his worldly possessions, point the reader to the vanity of trusting in earthly riches. What character so stands for cunning as the crafty Jacob's? Or whose life so inspires confidence in God in the

hour of trouble as that of this same man when his heart was changed, and he became a "prince with God"? Joseph has been the model for purity, brotherly kindness, and filial affection, from the days of Moses. These biographies, so briefly told, are like stars shining in the darkness, and have guided many to the way of life.

As You Read

1..Meditate. The longer you think about what you read, the more clearly you will grasp it, and the more easily you will remember it.

2. Use Bible helps,— a Bible dictionary, Bible concordance, Bible commentaries, books about the Holy Land, etc. But always make the Bible *first*, remembering that "one drop of the essential tincture of the word of God is better than a sea full of our commentings and sermonizings."

3. Use a notebook, and jot down helpful texts, promises, etc. It is said that every great truth of the Bible has its roots in Genesis. Make a list of such truths.

Third Week: January 15-21

15. Gen. 46, 47: A joyful meeting.
16. Gen. 48-50: Death of Jacob and Joseph.
17. Ex. 1-4: Oppression; the call of Moses; Aaron.
18. Ex. 5-8: Warnings and plagues.
19. Ex. 9-11: Plagues.
20. Ex. 12, 13: The first Passover; by fire and cloud.
21. Ex. 14, 15: Through the Red Sea; a song of triumph.

Mastering the Books of the Bible

This week marks the completion of the reading of the first book. If it is possible, by all means reread it, in one or two sittings, reviewing the main facts. Turn the leaves one by one, and *think through* the chapters.

If you have time, read over the suggested outlines given last week, select the one that pleases you best, and outline the book accordingly, adding carefully-thought-out sub-titles.

Bible Reading by Books

It seems a pity that so many persons never come to the place where they are willing to read the Bible a book at a time, as they would read any other book of the same length, in which they were absorbingly interested. Yet to read the Bible in this way, mastering book after book, "is to fill the mind with the great thoughts of God."

Years ago, on a Pacific liner, a young woman was observed to bring her Bible to the deck morning after morning. She was reading it, a book at a time; and her conversation on the subject showed that she had discovered the satisfaction of reading the Bible, not as a hard, unpleasant duty, but as a privilege and a joy.

Dr. Gray tells the story of a man who went into the country one day to spend the Sabbath, taking with him a small copy of the epistle to the Ephesians. "In the afternoon, going out into the woods and lying down under a tree, he began to read it; he read it through at a single sitting, and finding his interest aroused, read it through again the same way, and, his interest increasing, again and again." In all, he read it through twelve or fifteen times; and, said he, "When I arose to go into the house, I was in possession of Ephesians; or, better yet, it was in possession of me; and I had been lifted up to sit in heavenly

places in Jesus Christ in an experimental sense in which that had not been true in me before, and will never cease to be true in me again."

Almost every Bible reader knows that originally its books were not divided into chapters and verses. The division into chapters was made in the early part of the thirteenth century; and the division of the chapters into verses was made after the art of printing had been invented, about the middle of the sixteenth century.

While these divisions are very convenient for reference, they have doubtless in many cases served to obscure the meaning. The books of the Bible are like other books in that there is an introduction, a development, and a conclusion. "Every book of the Bible has an *object*, as well as a *subject*;" and in order really to get its message, one needs to read it through without reference to these artificial divisions. To stop at the end of a chapter or verse, often breaks the thought of the book, and hence obscures the meaning.

Topical study is to be commended after a comprehensive survey of the Bible as a whole has been made, and when such general study is continued; but topical study alone, without much study of the contexts from which the texts are taken, is very likely to lead to misinterpretations. The person who studies in this way only is likely to think of the Bible merely as a collection of texts to which he may go for blocks with which to build up a creed, or for ammunition with which to overthrow an enemy.

So while we give a place of honor to this method of study, recognizing that Jesus Himself used it, and that the special truths for this present time demand it, we must remember that the best understanding of the Word cannot be obtained by making topical study the first or only method. It is possible that under exceptional conditions, the germ might be taken from the grain of corn, planted, and made to grow; but the all-wise Creator embedded it in the starch of the grain from which its early life should be nourished.

In view of these facts, we urge all who shall spend "a year with the Book" to read, whenever possible, a book at a time. The daily assignments are made as a matter of convenience for those who wish to follow this plan; they will also give the reader an idea whether or not he is keeping up with the read-

ing. But those who read by subjects and by books, who read, reread, and read again, will obtain a new vision of God's unfolding revelation.

The Original Languages of the Bible

"The original languages of the Biblical books were Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Nearly all the Old Testament was composed in Hebrew, the language spoken by Israel in Canaan before the exile, but after the return gradually giving way — as the speech of common intercourse — to the Aramaic. . . . Parts of Daniel and Ezra and one verse of Jeremiah (10: 11) are in Aramaic. There is also an Aramaic coloring to many expressions scattered through the Old Testament. A dialect of Aramaic was the vernacular of Palestine in New Testament times, and it is probable that Jesus' teachings were spoken by Him in Aramaic, and later rendered into Greek by the teachers of the early apostolic church. Apart from this Aramaic basis of the Gospels, especially the first three, and of some material in Acts, the New Testament was composed entirely in Greek, the Greek of ordinary intercourse in the Hellenistic world."

What President Wilson Says About the Bible

Early in 1917, the Scripture Gift Mission asked President Wilson to write an inscription to be printed on the flyleaf of each book distributed by the mission. The president's reply, given below, shows that he knows the Book:

JULY 23, 1917.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
WASHINGTON.

The Bible is the word of life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves — read, not little snatches here and there, but long passages that will really be the road to the heart of it. You will find it full of real men and women not only, but also of the things you have wondered about and been troubled about all your life, as men have been always; and the more you read the more it will become plain to you what things are worth while and what are not, what things make men happy — loyalty, right dealing, speaking the truth, readiness to give everything for what they think their duty, and, most of all, the wish that they may have the real approval of the Christ, who gave everything for them — and the things that are guaranteed to make men unhappy — selfishness, cowardice, greed, and everything that is low and mean. When you have read the Bible, you will know that it is the word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness, and your own duty.

(Signed) WOODROW WILSON.

Fourth Week: January 22-28

- 22. Ex. 16, 17: The Sabbath honored; victory over Amalek.
- 23. Ex. 18-20: Jethro; Sinai; the law spoken.
- 24. Ex. 21-23: Laws; warnings; promises.
- 25. Ex. 24-27: A willing offering; the sanctuary.
- 26. Ex. 28, 29: The priesthood; offerings.
- 27. Ex. 30, 31: The Sabbath a sign.
- 28. Ex. 32, 33: Idolatry; punishment.

Exodus

In the Hebrew Bible, this book is called by its opening words, which mean, "And these are the names." The name "Exodus," given to the book in the Greek translation, signifies literally, "Going out," or "Departure," and refers to the going forth of Israel from Egypt.

Genesis closes with the family of Israel, comfortable and prosperous, pleasantly settled in Egypt. Exodus opens with that same family, grown "more and mightier" than the Egyptians, in bitter bondage and oppression. The book relates in detail the story of their great deliverance, and shows how they became a nation, with a thorough organization, efficient leadership, a complete code of laws, and an established form of worship.

The great purpose of the book is to relate the first steps in the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Three far-reaching systems of laws are revealed in Exodus, — moral, ceremonial, and civil; and prominence is given to the essential truth of redemption by blood. The necessity of absolute obedience to the commands of Jehovah, and of utter separation from the world — as individuals, by families, and even in business affairs — is clearly taught.

The life of Moses, from his romantic rescue from Egyptian malice in his infancy, through all the thrilling years of his wonderful experiences as the chosen leader of Israel, is of absorbing interest.

Outlining the Book of Exodus

Many plans are suggested for arranging this book by subjects. Here are a few:

1. History (1-18); Laws (19-24); Worship (25-40).
2. Historical (1-19); Legislative (20-40).
3. Slavery, Salvation, Sinai, Service.

Sinai

The peninsula of Sinai is a triangle whose western side extends along the Gulf of Suez for about one hundred and ninety miles, and whose eastern border is washed by the waters of the Gulf of Akabah. The peninsula contains about 11,500 square miles, being somewhat larger than the state of Vermont. "A rugged mass of granite mountains occupies the body of the peninsula, the eastern and western ranges meeting in an angle at the south."

"The Scripture use of the two names 'Sinai' and 'Horeb' ('dry') is such as to make it probable that 'Horeb' was the general name for the mountain group, and 'Sinai' the name of the special summit on which Jehovah descended in fire and 'talked with' Israel."

There has been considerable discussion as to which of the numerous peaks of the Sinai peninsula is the one from which the law was given. The general opinion, however, points to the northern peak of an isolated ridge, two miles long from northwest to southeast, and about a mile broad. This northern peak, Ras-es-Safsafah, rises "high above all other mountains near it, and in sight, and is so isolated from them by the plain and by deep and steep ravines, that bounds might have been set around it. At its very base lies the Wadi-er-Rahah ('rest'), a plain two miles long from southeast to northwest, and a half mile wide, containing two million square yards' available standing room, a space doubled by the valleys which open into it on the east."

The Law Given

One of the most noteworthy events of this world's history is found in our reading this week,—the giving of the Ten Commandments, spoken by God Himself, in the hearing of His chosen people. "All eyes," says one writer, "may well be turned to Exodus 20, and the sublime event therein recorded."

This law is the foundation of God's government, and will endure forever. On this point, Mrs. E. G. White says, "The sun shining in the heaven, the solid earth upon which you dwell, are God's witnesses that His law is changeless and eternal."

Some of the reasons for the awe-inspiring and solemnizing material manifestations of God at Sinai are thus set forth by Rawlinson: "No revelation that God has made of Himself has ever been so terrible in its material accompaniments as that at Sinai, and no occasion can ever be conceived of as more needing the employment of solemn, startling, and impressive circumstances. Here was a people gross of heart, delighting in flesh-pots, debased by slavery, careless of freedom, immoral, inclined to idolatry, which had to be elevated into God's living witness among the nations, the depository of His truth, the teacher of the rest of mankind for ages. Given the object of impressing such a nation permanently with the convictions that it had received a divine revelation, and that very dreadful consequences would follow the neglect of it, and the need of the thunders and other terrors of Sinai becomes manifest."

The Lesson of Reverence

The lesson of reverence is strongly emphasized by the preparations enjoined on the people at Sinai. The "mount of God" was made holy by the divine presence; the buildings dedicated to His service and worship to-day, where His people gather to hear His word, should likewise be regarded as sacred.

Fifth Week: January 29 to February 4

- 29. Ex. 34-36: Commandments rewritten; willing service.
- 30. Ex. 37, 38: Furniture of the tabernacle.
- 31. Ex. 39, 40: The tabernacle finished and dedicated.
 - 1. Lev. 1-4: Burnt, meal, peace, and sin offerings.
 - 2. Lev. 5-7: Trespass offerings.
 - 3. Lev. 8-10: Consecration; desecration.
 - 4. Lev. 11, 12: Clean and unclean.

Leviticus

This name is given to the third book of the Bible because it deals chiefly with the Levites and the priests, and their services and duties in connection with the sanctuary and its worship. It also sets forth the duties of the people in regard to worship, offerings, and sacrifices.

The time covered is very brief, being only the first month of the second year of the wilderness wandering. Three brief narratives are introduced.

The great theme of Leviticus is holiness,—a holy God, a holy priesthood, a holy people. The Hebrew word for holiness is said to occur 159 times in the book. “The holiness of God shines like a white, fearful light upon the whole book. It is in contrast with that holiness that the sin of man is seen and understood. . . . Leviticus speaks forevermore of the awfulness of sin in the light of the holiness of God, of the plenteous redemption springing from the love of God, of the possibility of holiness of life, created by communion with God.”

The purpose of Leviticus “is to reveal God’s method of dealing with sin. The entire book is fragrant of Christ. Every sacrifice, every garment, every ceremony, points to Him.”

Do not make the mistake of thinking that because this is a book of ancient laws, and rites, and ceremonies, therefore it is unimportant and may be lightly passed over. Read carefully chapter 16, dealing with the cleansing of the sanctuary; note what is said concerning talebearing, acceptable offerings, the sacredness of the tithe, etc.; especially notice how often, and in how many ways, the duty of loving our neighbor is enjoined.

Chapter Study

Try summarizing the contents of each chapter, after you have read it, according to some such outline as this: (1) Object; (2) Prominent Persons; (3) Reference to Christ; (4) Leading Lesson; (5) Personal Help.

Do not allow such study to become merely a matter of form. Properly carried out, it will "yield an accurate, detailed knowledge of the facts contained in each chapter of the Bible, a useful discipline for the will, and a fruitful quickening of the devotional life."

If You Have Time

Review the book of Exodus. Note its relation to Genesis and Leviticus. It is a history of rebellion and forgiveness, of murmuring and mercy. Mark these divisions in your Bible. How has the reading of this book helped you?

Study the different offerings mentioned in your daily reading in Leviticus, till they are clearly defined in your mind. Note the restrictions given in regard to food. Read what the Bible dictionary says about lepers and leprosy. Note how often and how minutely the thought is brought out that God is particular about details.

Sixth Week: February 5-11

5. Lev. 13, 14: Leprosy.
6. Lev. 15, 16: Ceremonial purification; atonement.
7. Lev. 17-19: Instruction; warnings; laws.
8. Lev. 20-22: Various laws.
9. Lev. 23-25: The Sabbath; blasphemy; year of jubilee.
10. Lev. 26, 27: Warnings and promises.
11. Num. 1-3: A census; order; redemption money.

The Pentateuch

The first five books of the Bible are called the Pentateuch, a word meaning "five books;" namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Like the name "Bible," the word "Pentateuch" is nowhere found in the Scripture itself. The Jews called these books, when speaking of them collectively, the law, the law of Moses, the book of Moses, the book of the law of Moses, the law of the Lord, the book of the law of God, and the book of the law of the Lord. They also called them by a special title which means "the five fifths of the law;" that is, the whole, the complete law. In Hebrew manuscripts, the five books are still considered as one, though the different books are called by the title of their opening words.

The five books comprising the Pentateuch were written, it is thought, during a period of about forty years, and they record the history of the world from the beginning to 1451 B. C.

Some Bible writers add the book of Joshua to the Pentateuch, and give the name "Hexateuch," or "six books," to the whole collection.

The Books of the Bible

There are sixty-six books in the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New. The books of each Testament may be grouped under five heads, as follows:

OLD TESTAMENT		NEW TESTAMENT	
Law books	5	Gospels	4
Historical books	12	Historical books	1
Poetical books	5	Pauline letters	14 ¹
Major prophets	5	General letters	7
Minor prophets	12	Prophetical books	1
Total	39	Total	27

¹ Many authorities give the number of the Pauline epistles as 13, and place the book of Hebrews in the General Epistles.

It will be observed that these books are grouped largely according to their contents. Thus the law books form one group, the historical books another group, and so on. Some one has said that all the books of the Bible may be arranged around four words,—Precept, Practice, Principle, and Prophecy. The following table, arranged by Alexander Patterson, shows at a glance how the books of both the Old and the New Testament group themselves around these key words:

THE OLD TESTAMENT		THE NEW TESTAMENT
The Pentateuch	Books of Precept	The Gospels
Historical Books	Books of Practice	The Acts
Poetical Books	Books of Principles	The Epistles
Prophetical Books	Books of Prophecy	The Revelation

Be sure to learn the names of the books of the Bible, and drill yourself in saying them till they are as familiar to you as the letters of the alphabet. Then learn them by groups.

Words, Verses, Chapters

It seems strange to us to think that there ever was a time when the Bible was not divided into chapters and verses; stranger still to know that once even the words were written with no space between them; strangest of all, that in the ancient Hebrew language, in which most of the Old Testament was originally written, all the vowel characters were omitted, and only those which represented consonant sounds were written. It was as if we should write the first verse of the Old Testament thus:

NTHBGNNNGGDCRTDTHHVNNDTHERTH.

Gradually changes in the way the writing was done took place. Words began to be separated from one another, it is said, in the days of Ezra; still there were no chapters marked, and no verses.

The division of the books of the Bible into chapters is attributed to two men,—a Spanish cardinal, Hugo, and an English archbishop, Stephen Langton. Both these men lived in the thirteenth century. This arrangement was soon adopted into the Vulgate, or Latin Bible, and was later transferred by a learned rabbi to the Hebrew Bible.

The division into chapters is purely arbitrary, and often breaks into the narrative or argument presented. However, it is a great convenience for reference, and has not been changed

in the two great revisions made since it was introduced,— the King James, or Authorized Version, issued in 1611, and the Revised Version, completed in 1885.

About three hundred years after the division of the books of the Bible into chapters came into general use, another improvement was made. A Greek New Testament was published in 1551 by Robert Stephens, and in it the verses were marked. Mr. Stephens' son wrote afterward that the plan of dividing the chapters of the Bible into verses came to his father while he was on a lonely horseback ride from Paris to Lyons. The new form met with favor, was soon adopted into the Vulgate, and has been in constant use ever since.

Outline for Leviticus

Offerings (1-7); Priests (8-10); Purity (11-16); Holiness (17-22); Feasts (23); Laws (24-27).

A slightly fuller outline is the following: Law of Sacrifice (1-7); Consecration of Priesthood (8-10); Law of Clean and Unclean; day of atonement (11-16); Law of Holiness (17-27).

Seventh Week: February 12-18

12. Num. 4-6: Separated for service.
13. Num. 7, 8: Princely offerings.
14. Num. 9-11: Following the cloud; murmurings; punishment.
15. Num. 12-14: Jealousy punished; reward of unbelief.
16. Num. 15, 16: Sin and punishment.
17. Num. 17-19: Aaron honored; support of priests and Levites.
18. Num. 20, 21: Sin of Moses and Aaron; life for a look.

Numbers

This book takes its name from the fact that it contains two censuses, or numberings, of Israel, one at Sinai, the other in the plains of Moab, thirty-eight years later. In the Hebrew Bible, this book is called *B'midhbar* ("in the wilderness"), which is the fifth word of Num. 1: 1. This is a very fitting title, for it records the fortunes of Israel in the Sinaitic desert. In the first Greek translation of the Old Testament — the Septuagint — the book was called *Arithmoi* (from which comes our word "arithmetic"), and in the Latin Vulgate, *Numeri*. These words, like our English title, refer to the two censuses that were taken. The time covered by this book is about thirty-eight years.

Numbers has also been aptly called "The Book of Journeys." The first chapters are a continuation of Leviticus; but beginning with chapter 9, the narrative of Exodus, which left Israel encamped at Sinai, is resumed. Their main experiences on the way to Kadesh-barnea are quite fully recorded; but of the years in the wilderness, little is told save that the camp was moved from time to time.

"The book of Numbers is rich in fragments of ancient poetry, some of them of great beauty, and all throwing an interesting light on the times in which they were composed. Such, for instance, is the blessing of the high priest (6: 24-26). Such, too, are the chants which were the signal for the ark to move when the people journeyed, and for it to rest when they were about to encamp." The beautiful prophetic poems uttered by Balaam, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, appeal no less to the mind and the heart than to the ear, so lofty and musical are their cadences.

Life for a Look

The New Testament is interwoven with the Old; the Old Testament is the background of the New. The one supplements and completes the other. Long after the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, Jesus referred to the incident in the familiar words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Of the serpent of brass it was said, "Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." To those bitten by the serpent of sin, Jesus gives the invitation, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved."

"We can understand why Christ should be represented by the innocent lamb and animals of like nature; but how can He be fitly represented by the serpent, the beast that is the symbol of Satan? We see in this to what degree our Lord descended in order to rescue us. He was 'made a curse for us; . . . cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' Jesus experienced that which Paul said he could wish for himself—he was accursed for His brethren."

In later years, the children of Israel made an idol of this brazen image, and burned incense before it. It was destroyed by Hezekiah.

The Rosetta Stone

A hundred years ago the Old Testament "stood alone in an otherwise unknown age. It was the only known representative of the ten centuries preceding the rise of Greece and Rome. One hundred years ago there was not a single document contemporaneous with the Old Testament known to be in existence."

But a little over a hundred years ago the world's knowledge of Bible times began to be increased. In 1799, as one result of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, the Rosetta Stone (so named because it was unearthed near Rosetta, at the mouth of the Nile) was discovered. This stone was of black granite, three feet nine inches high, two feet four and one-half inches wide, and eleven inches thick. It is supposed to have been at least twelve inches higher, and to have had a rounded top at the time when it was set up, 195 B. C.

The smooth face of the stone was divided into three parts, one above another. On each of these appeared an inscription,—the upper one resembling the hieroglyphics seen everywhere on monuments and obelisks in Egypt; the middle section covered

with another kind of script; and the lower written in Greek. This last inscription was easily deciphered. It told the name of the man in whose honor the monument was erected, Ptolemy Epiphanes, and recited various creditable deeds attributed to him. Naturally the other two inscriptions were at once assumed to be a repetition of this story, and the value of the stone was immediately recognized. After copies of the writings had been made, the stone was carefully packed and sent to England. It is now one of the treasures of the British Museum.

In 1818, after years of painstaking study, a French scholar succeeded in deciphering the remaining inscriptions of the Rosetta Stone, and in so doing, "unlocked the old door to the civilization of the Nile valley. . . . The stately obelisks and majestic columns were still as the tomb; but their story now rings through the enlightened nations of the earth. Their designers and builders perished thousands of years ago; . . . but their testimony abides, unchallenged, chiseled in imperishable rocks."

In the great mass of material yielded by the Nile valley since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and the deciphering of its inscriptions, the Christian world finds abundant "testimony to the accuracy of the records and hints of the Old Testament regarding the character of the ancient Egyptians."

Eighth Week: February 19-25

19. Num. 22-24: "The hire of wrongdoing."
20. Num. 25-27: The second census; the new leader.
21. Num. 28-30: Offerings and vows.
22. Num. 31, 32: Conquest of Midian.
23. Num. 33, 34: Encampments; boundaries of Canaan.
24. Num. 35, 36: Cities of refuge.
25. Deut. 1-3: Retrospect.

You May Do Wrong

Sometimes God allows men to have their own way — and often this is a part of the penalty for their disobedience. "When I was a young preacher," said John A. Hutton, "I believed that if one transgressed the law, something would rise up out of the ground and hit him. I've got hold of a new idea now. It is this: *If you want to do wrong, you may.* That is a more dreadful thought."

Balaam wanted to do wrong. He knew the right, but he chose the evil. He had heard the voice of God; but he listened to the voice of flattery, and sold his soul for the wages of unrighteousness. Sad indeed was the end of this man, who had seen "the vision of the Almighty" and known "the knowledge of the Most High"!

The Key to the Cuneiform Inscriptions

The finding of the Rosetta Stone awakened a great desire among Bible students everywhere to explore the historical lands of southwestern Asia, in the hope of finding still further confirmation of the sacred record. All through the nineteenth century, and up to the present, the work of surveying, locating, excavating, collecting, and comparing has gone steadily forward. The great valley of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers has furnished a rich field for archaeological research. For centuries, travelers through this valley had noticed many strange ruins and artificial mounds. Some of these men "had noticed and occasionally picked up, here and there, especially near the mounds, bits of burnt bricks, and fragments of tablets, upon which were found some peculiar, wedge-shaped characters. No one could determine whether they were writing, or simply a species of artistic ornamentation." Between 1808 and 1820,

an English traveler named Rich made a collection of these curiously inscribed little bricks, and sent them to the British Museum. But no one at that time could read their story.

In 1835, Henry C. Rawlinson, then a young English officer in the Persian army, found on Mount Behistun, in Persian Kurdistan, what is now known as the Behistun inscription.

The mountain that attracted the attention of the young officer was of limestone, "rising out of the plain to a height of seventeen hundred feet. One side of this mass was almost perpendicular in form. About three hundred and fifty feet above the base, on this perpendicular side, Rawlinson could see a large space which had been carefully hewn off and polished. Upon this prepared surface he could also descry a large bas-relief representing a king, before whom stood a long line of captives bound neck to neck with a rope. Adjacent to this group were several columns of cuneiform inscriptions." The young officer determined to secure a copy of these; and finally, after working at the task at intervals for four years, in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties and often at the risk of his life, he completed the work.

The next thing was to find the hidden meaning. Seeing that the inscriptions were in three languages, he at once began to study Sanskrit, Zend, and Pahlavi. He was already familiar with the Persian. With incredible patience he toiled at his task. Finally success crowned his efforts, and five columns of old Persian cuneiform writing, nearly four hundred lines, yielded their hidden meaning. Hereafter the cuneiform inscriptions could be read.

It was found that this ancient inscription had been made by order of Darius I, king of Persia, about 515 B. C. It gave the history of various revolts, and contained other valuable information.

"On the supposition that the other two inscriptions told the same story, scholars began to attempt to read them. Very soon the second tongue, the Median, or Susian, began to yield its secrets. Then the third series of columns, the Babylonian, was forced to give up its hidden treasures. This Behistun group was found to sustain the same relation to the cuneiform languages of Babylonia that the Rosetta Stone sustained to the tongues of ancient Egypt. It was the key to its ancient life, people, and government."

For Supplementary Study

Review the book of Numbers. Make a list of sins shown by this record to be abhorrent to God; such as, slander (12); unbelief (13, 14); Sabbath breaking (15). Add others. What have you learned about "acceptable offerings" from reading this book? How are the experiences of Israel as recorded in it typical? What are shown to be the results of discontent? What brings failure in Christian experience? What lessons of comfort are clearly portrayed?

Outline for Numbers

If you have time, outline the book under the following heads, filling in the subordinate headings and references:

1. Preparation Chapters 1 to 10: 10
2. The March Chapter 10: 11 to 21: 35
3. The Victory Chapters 22-36

Ninth Week: February 26 to March 4

- 26. Deut. 4-6: The law repeated.
- 27. Deut. 7-9: Exhortation and warnings.
- 28. Deut. 10-12: Reminiscences; pleadings; laws.
 - 1. Deut. 13-16: Doom of idolaters; tithing.
 - 2. Deut. 17-19: The coming Prophet.
 - 3. Deut. 20-22: Social and moral laws.
 - 4. Deut. 23-25: Social and moral laws.

Deuteronomy

The Hebrew title of this book is an expression meaning "And these are the words." The name "Deuteronomy" came from a Greek word meaning "second law." However, this book is much more than a mere repetition of the laws heretofore given to Israel. "It is a rehearsal under peculiar circumstances and for a peculiar purpose." Dr. H. T. Sell says:

"A crisis had come in the affairs of the nation, and a review of Israel's history and a restatement of God's law must be made. A new generation had grown up, which had not heard the original promulgation of the law at Sinai. A new country was before the nation. This country was devoted to an idolatrous worship of the most seductive kind. On every hill and in every grove this worship was carried on. An unflinching devotion to God was necessary to resist this alluring worship, which was more to be dreaded than any armed resistance. The people had been leading a nomadic life; now they were to be settled in cities and villages, and to till the land. The observance of some laws had been suffered to lapse. The people must be shown the need of conforming their lives and conduct in these new relations to God's laws."

Deuteronomy is the fifth and last book of the Pentateuch, and is mainly made up of three addresses by Moses, just before his death. In chapters 1 to 4: 40, he rehearses God's goodness to Israel; chapters 5 to 26 review the law for the new generation; chapters 27 to 30 are a renewal of the covenant; chapters 31, 32, and 33 contain Moses' final words of encouragement, his farewell song, and his prophetic benediction to Israel.

These addresses by the leader of Israel were both an admonition and a farewell. "His words look both forward and backward — backward along the way in which they had been led by God, and forward along the way in which He is yet to

lead them. The deliverance from Egypt is repeatedly made the motive for obedience; obedience is the condition of their obtaining the land before them." There was much in their past experience that Israel needed to remember. "Thou shalt remember," "Lest thou forget," "Take heed to thyself," are expressions that occur frequently.

The time covered by this book may be easily reckoned. It opens with an address given by Moses on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year of the exodus. In Joshua 4:19, we read that Israel entered Canaan on the tenth day of the first month. This includes the thirty days' mourning for Moses.

The Message of Deuteronomy

"The first appeal of the book," says Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, "is to love of God. It is objected that love cannot be commanded. That is true. Love is born when least expected. We love because He first loved. On the other hand, love can be refused. We may not love, even though He first loves. The message then is, 'Harden not your heart.' Do not blind yourself to God's love. Detect it in the rainbow and in the rain, in the cross and in the red life that blossoms from the ground. Having detected it, answer it. The final appeal of Deuteronomy shows how love is answered. It is by obedience. In answer to love, and in the power of love, obey."

Tenth Week: March 5-11

5. Deut. 26-28: Blessings and cursings.
6. Deut. 29-31: Mercy for the repentant; admonitions.
7. Deut. 32-34: Song, blessing, and death of Moses.
8. Joshua 1-4: The new leader; the end of the journey.
9. Joshua 5-8: Obedience and victory; sin and defeat.
10. Joshua 9-13: Days of conquest.
11. Joshua 14-17: The choice of Caleb.

Joshua — the Book

The book of Joshua is the first of the twelve *historical books*, which record the history of the chosen people from their first occupation of the land of Canaan as a nation to the return from the captivity. The book is named for its leading character, by whom a part of it is supposed to have been written. "The whole tenor of the first twelve chapters," says Fallows, "bespeaks an eyewitness who bore some part in the transactions; and the expression, 'We were passed over,' in chapter 5: 1, bears this out, as well as the circumstantial vividness of the narrative. . . . This section from chapters 13 to 22 inclusive, which contains an account of the distribution of the land, seems to be based upon written documents, in which the property was accurately described."

The book covers a period of twenty-five years. It describes the conquest of Canaan, its division among the tribes, and makes mention of the typical rest in that land, which foreshadowed the complete rest of God's people in heaven. Part of the book is "the spirited recital of heroic deeds," part of it is given up to geographical records, and part contains earnest admonition and solemn warning.

Mount Nebo

"Mount Nebo is not a mountain towering up in a peak; looking eastward from the highlands of Judea, there are no peaks to be seen on the Moab plateau. A knoll, now called Neba, on a ridge a little over nine miles from the head of the Dead Sea, is no doubt Mount Nebo. The ridge is half a mile wide, and extends toward the Jordan for two miles, and the western end may have been called Pisgah."—*Tarbell*.

An Appendix

The last chapter of Deuteronomy, giving the account of the death of Moses, is regarded as a supplement, added by a later writer. "This appendix may have been attached to the roll of manuscript soon after the death of Moses; or, as some scholars suppose, what is now the last of Deuteronomy may have been formerly the beginning of the book of Joshua. These books were written before the invention of sections, divisions, and chapters, as well as points and pauses. At that time, several books were connected, following one another on the roll. The beginning of one book, therefore, might very easily be transferred to the end of the preceding one, and in process of time, come to be regarded as its real conclusion. The author of this appendix was probably Joshua, the intimate friend of the great lawgiver, and his successor as the leader of Israel."

Lessons from the Life of Moses

"Moses' life was divided into three forties. In the first forty years (in Egypt), he was learning to be somebody; in the second forty years (in Midian), he was learning to be nobody; in the third forty years (in the wilderness of Sinai), he was proving what God could do with a man who had learned those two lessons."—*Moody*.

"Had Moses failed to go, had God
Granted his prayer, there would have been
For *him* no leadership to win,
No pillar fire, no magic rod,
No wonders in the land of Zin;
No smiting of the sea; no tears,
Ecstatic, shed on Sinai's steep;
No Nebo, with a God to keep
His burial! Only forty years
Of desert watching with his sheep!"

Eleventh Week: March 12-18

12. Joshua 18-21: The tabernacle set up; cities of refuge.
13. Joshua 22-24: Joshua's farewell; the covenant renewed.
14. Judges 1-3: Othniel; Ehud; Shamgar.
15. Judges 4, 5: Deborah and Barak; a song of victory.
16. Judges 6-8: Gideon.
17. Judges 9, 10: Abimelech; Tola; Jair.
18. Judges 11, 12: Jephthah; Ibzan; Elon; Abdon.

Joshua — the Man

Joshua, "born a slave in the brick fields of Egypt," and chosen by divine appointment to succeed Moses as leader of Israel, was about forty years old at the time of the Exodus. By his long and intimate association with Moses, by his faithfulness and loyalty in times of stress and trial, by his courage in war and his wise counsel in peace, and by his implicit confidence in God and unfaltering obedience to His commands, Joshua was peculiarly fitted to take up the great work to which he was called.

The name "Joshua" was originally "Hoshea," meaning "salvation," or "Jehoshua," "God's salvation."

Joshua was a type of Christ. "Jesus of the Old Testament brought ancient Israel into the typical land of promise. Jesus of the New Testament is yet to bring His people into the real land of promise, the eternal rest in the kingdom of God."

"God buries His workmen, but carries on His work." The period of mourning in the plains of Moab was more than a formal matter with Israel. "Never," says Dean Stanley, "could there have been such a blank in the history of the chosen people as when they became conscious that he who had been their leader, their lawgiver, their oracle, as far back as their memory could reach, was taken from them at the very moment when they seemed most to need him."

Moses was dead; but the real Leader of Israel "ever liveth." It was His power, not the mantle of the human Moses, that came upon the quiet, loyal, brave-hearted Joshua, and enabled him to lead Israel into Canaan, and leave that land in their possession when his work was ended. Joshua was always ready for service; and "success is readiness for occasions."

Of the character of Joshua, Mrs. E. G. White says:

“Courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God,—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the promised land. During the sojourn in the wilderness he had acted as prime minister to Moses, and by his quiet, unpretending fidelity, his steadfastness when others wavered, his firmness to maintain the truth in the midst of danger, he had given evidence of his fitness to succeed Moses, even before he was called to the position by the voice of God.”

Outline and Review

The book of Joshua may be outlined under three heads:

1. Conquest of Canaan.
2. Partition of Lands.
3. Joshua's Farewell.

Spend a few minutes in meditating on the life of Joshua, and make a list of some of his qualities that impress you. “Throughout, he is the fearless soldier, the straightforward leader, the simple, unquestioning executor of the divine will.” He “sets before us the energy of faith, which, grounding itself on the promise of God, and trusting Him, loyally addresses itself to the appointed task.”

Joshua was courageous, honest, faithful, enthusiastic. What else?

The Book of Judges

According to the usual classification of the books of the Old Testament, Judges, which takes its name from the men whose exploits it recounts, is the second of the *historical* series.

Genesis is the Book of Beginnings. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy tell the story of the chosen people from Egypt to Canaan. During this period, and by the events herein recorded, the children of Israel became a nation. From this point, their history is recorded in the so-called historical books, though these earlier books also are historical.

The story of thirteen of the fifteen judges of Israel is told in Judges; and though the chronology of this period is beset with difficulties, Bible scholars seem to agree that the time cov-

ered is from three hundred to four hundred fifty years. The authorship of the book is uncertain. "Jewish tradition ascribes it to Samuel, although portions belong to earlier times, and a few references must have been incorporated later." But whoever the author, evidently he had a well-defined plan in mind. His object was to show that "the only way to happiness was to shun idolatry and obey the commandments of the Lord." The sins of the people are plainly set forth, and no attempt is made to excuse or hide them.

Twelfth Week: March 19-25

- 19. Judges 13-16: Samson.
- 20. Judges 17-19: Micah.
- 21. Judges 20, 21: The desolation of Benjamin.
- 22. Ruth.
- 23. 1 Sam. 1-3: The child in the temple.
- 24. 1 Sam. 4-6: The ark captured and returned.
- 25. 1 Sam. 7-10: The first king of Israel.

In the Days of the Judges

The book of Judges gives a picture, or rather a series of pictures, of the history of Israel during the three hundred years that followed their settlement in Canaan. Their condition as a nation is described in the statement, several times repeated, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The results of such a course were inevitable; the ground gained was lost, and again and again the enemies of Israel oppressed them. To meet particular emergencies, the judges were raised up. "Some were followed by successors, but not all. The occasion of their coming was the need of deliverance from foreign invaders sent upon them as a chastisement for apostasy. After the deliverances, there were periods of 'rest,' in which the people prospered, but without any central government." The story of thirteen of these deliverers is given in this book; that of Samuel and Eli, whose names belong with the judges, is given elsewhere.

The following outline shows the different periods of Israel's bondage, as recorded in Judges, and the men raised up to deliver them:

- First servitude (to Mesopotamia)—Othniel.
- Second servitude (to Moab)—Ehud, Shamgar.
- Third servitude (to Jabin and Sisera)—Deborah and Barak.
- Fourth servitude (to Midian)—Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair.
- Fifth servitude (to Ammon)—Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon.
- Sixth servitude (to the Philistines)—Samson.

Practical Lessons

The great lesson of the book of Judges—"keep yourselves from idols"—is especially applicable to God's chosen people at the present hour. The world lays its net to entrap the unwary. Pleasure, amusement, love, happiness, success in the

modern meaning of the term,—all beckon alluringly to-day, just as they beckoned the young men and women of Israel in the time of the judges. In the record of that period, we see the results of mingling with the world, marrying unbelievers, and setting up “other gods” in the heart’s shrine. The fair promises of the world proved a delusion; doing what was right in their own eyes, and justifying their evil course, brought only weakness and sorrow to Israel. The spoilers spoiled them; and in their affliction they turned again to the Lord. Chastisement was necessary, in order to save them.

The experience of Gideon shows that the Lord can work with the weakest of human instruments, if they are wholly consecrated to Him.

Samson’s life illustrates the failure that follows self-confidence, the waste of wonderful opportunities. He “wist not that the Lord was departed from him,” though it was not long till he realized his human weakness when shorn of divine strength. Is the Lord with us? or are we trying to work for Him in our own strength? Only as He is with us can we succeed.

The Book of Ruth

“In the days when the judges judged,” the incidents recorded in this book took place. It is a dark background—apostasy and lawlessness and rebellion within, oppression and robbery and cruelty without—against which is painted this sweet and restful picture of Jewish family life. But it was not recorded simply because of its beauty; its lessons of love, trust, and fidelity are as helpful to-day as when they were first written. It shows how filial devotion and trust in God are rewarded; how all the trials and sorrows of life work together for good to those who love the Lord; and that God is no respecter of persons, but “in every nation,” those who fear Him are accepted by Him. One great purpose of the book is to establish the lineage of David.

Information concerning a number of curious Hebrew customs is also given in this book; and of course, it has a special interest because of the picture it holds for us of the great-grandmother of David, who was to become, “far off down the centuries,” the ancestress of Jesus.

Ruth is the third of the *historical* books. The narrative is really a continuation of Judges, and was added to that book

by the ancient Jews. Even until the middle of the fifth century A. D., it was classed with Judges.

The time covered by the book is about ten years. Its authorship is uncertain, but it is quite generally attributed to Samuel.

Outline for Judges and Ruth

The books of Judges and Ruth fall naturally into three divisions:

1. Preface Judges 1, 2, 3: 1-6
2. Deliverances by the Judges Judges 3: 7 to 16
3. Stories of Israelitish Life Judges 17-21; Ruth

Fill out this outline, giving titles and references to the various incidents which it covers. Make a list of the judges. Mark with a star the two chapters that contain (1) a song of triumph; (2) a beautiful parable.

Thirteenth Week: March 26 to April 1

- 26. 1 Sam. 11-13: "Thy kingdom shall not continue."
- 27. 1 Sam. 14-16: "To obey is better than sacrifice."
- 28. 1 Sam. 17-19: A royal friend.
- 29. 1 Sam. 20-23: David flees from the wrath of Saul.
- 30. 1 Sam. 24-27: Death of Samuel.
- 31. 1 Sam. 28-31: Death of Saul and Jonathan.
- 1. 2 Sam. 1-4: David's lament; war with the house of Saul.

First and Second Samuel

Originally these two books were reckoned as one, and for the present purpose, will be so treated. They contain three "interlaced biographies,"—those of Samuel, the last and greatest of the judges; Saul, the first king of Israel; and David, the most noble and beloved of her rulers. It is supposed that the books are called by the prophet's name because his history comes first in the record.

The authorship of the books is a matter of dispute. One widely accepted theory is that the first twenty-four chapters were written by Samuel, and the remaining portions by Nathan and Gad, since these prophets are referred to in 1 Chron. 29: 29 as having a part in writing the life of King David. But though the human hand that traced these ancient pages is unknown, the authority of their divine Author is clearly seen. "The book of Samuel is one of the best specimens of Hebrew prose in the golden age of Hebrew literature. In prose, it holds the same place which Joel and the undisputed prophecies of Isaiah hold in poetical or prophetical language."

Ebenezer

When Samuel set up a stone between Mizpeh and Shen (see 1 Sam. 7: 12), to commemorate Israel's victory over the Philistines, he was following an old, old custom among the people of the East. About two hundred years after this time, a king of Moab, Mesha by name, who was a contemporary of Omri and Ahab, set up a pillar to commemorate his deliverance from the yoke of Israel. This pillar (known to us as the Moabite Stone) was set up at Dibon, in the hills of Moab, a day's journey eastward from the Red Sea. In 1868, this pillar was still standing, and was in a good state of preservation. It is now in the Louvre, in Paris.

Samuel

The influence of this prophet-judge was not confined to a small area in Israel. "He traveled through the whole land, appointed public meetings, and announced to the multitudes the lessons revealed to him by the Spirit of God. Year after year he called together the elders of the people. At Ramah, his residence, frequent meetings of the tribes took place." One of the greatest works of Samuel was the founding of the schools of the prophets, where young men of studious mind might receive an education that would fit them to be leaders and teachers in Israel.

Saul

The life of the first king of Israel may be divided into three parts: (1) promise time; (2) testing and failure; (3) disobedience and doom. He entered upon his career with the fairest possible prospects; before him were spread out "wonderful and beautiful possibilities. The morning of his kingdom rose almost cloudless." That his life should have gone out in such darkness and disgrace was due, not to a lack of opportunity for the development of moral fiber, but to his neglect to restrain and subdue the natural impulses of the human heart. Self-will, jealousy, and greed were allowed to rule his course; and gradually "he lost his kingly nature and power. His faults developed — treachery, vanity, selfishness, iniquity, blasphemy. He became almost insane."

Fourteenth Week: April 2-8

2. 2 Sam. 5-7: David's kingdom established.
3. 2 Sam. 8-10: David shows kindness to Saul's house.
4. 2 Sam. 11, 12: David's sin and punishment.
5. 2 Sam. 13, 14: Banishment and return of Absalom.
6. 2 Sam. 15-17: Conspiracy of Absalom.
7. 2 Sam. 18-20: Defeat and death of Absalom.
8. 2 Sam. 21-24: The last words of David.

David

David was a many-sided man. He possessed to an unusual degree the gift of versatility — he could do a great many things and do them well. As we reread the life of King David, we are impressed with the degree to which he possessed this wonderful gift.

“His is the widest character on record,” says Charles Reade. “In Holy Writ, Moses, Elijah, and Paul; in profane history, Solon, Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and others, excelled David in one quality or another. But David presents a greater number of distinct and striking features than any one of those great men; and that is why I style him the widest character on record,—a shepherd, a soldier, a courtier, a famous friend, a fugitive, an actor, a marauder, a general, a king, a statesman, an exile, a priest, a prophet, a saint, a criminal, a penitent,—and nothing by halves.”

“The qualities of his character were all of the strongest, whether for good or for evil,” says Salmond. “In many respects he was the child of his age; and the age was rough, ruthless, and changeful. But in him the finer qualities overbore all. On many occasions we see memorable illustrations of the tenderness of his affections, the purity of his aims, his filial dutifulness, his sense of justice, his respect for public right, his wisdom, his chivalry, his patriotism, his consideration for others, his magnanimity to enemies, his fidelity to friends. Above all, the strength of his character was his piety. That piety was altogether practical and real. It was a joy in God in times of good; a quenchless thirst for God in times of declension, never failing to bring him back in contrition; a chastened submissiveness to God in times of trouble; and at all times a clear trust in God, which grew in power and beauty as years and experience grew on him.”

The character of David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," has been called "a harp of many strings." Its foundation was laid in a "peculiarly firm and unshaken trust in Jehovah, and the brightest and most spiritual views of the creation and government of the world, together with a constant, tender, and sensitive awe of the Holy One in Israel; a simple, pure striving never to be untrue to Him; and the strongest efforts to return to Him all the more loyally after errors and transgressions."

Review and Outline for First and Second Samuel

The history of the kingdom of Israel, from its founding to its close, is told in the three "double books,"—First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, and First and Second Chronicles. The narrative begins in First Samuel, and is carried forward from the birth of Samuel, recorded in the first book bearing his name, to the closing days of the reign of King David, in the second. It will be a good plan, on finishing the reading of Second Samuel, to review the two books briefly. They may be outlined under three general heads: (1) The Administration of Samuel; (2) The Administration of Saul; (3) The Administration of David.

Fill in the leading events under each head, with references. Give titles and references to three songs found in these books, and make a list of Saul's seven principal campaigns, with references.

Fifteenth Week: April 9-15

9. 1 Kings 1, 2: Solomon made king.
10. 1 Kings 3, 4: Wisdom and riches of Solomon.
11. 1 Kings 5, 6: Solomon builds the temple.
12. 1 Kings 7, 8: Solomon's house; the temple dedicated.
13. 1 Kings 9, 10: Visit of the queen of Sheba.
14. 1 Kings 11, 12: Death of Solomon; revolt of ten tribes.
15. 1 Kings 13, 14: The disobedient prophet.

The Books of First and Second Kings

These books, the sixth and seventh of the *historical series*, were originally one. They are a continuation of the books of Samuel, and record the history of Israel from the last days of David to the complete destruction and desolation of Jerusalem, and the carrying away into captivity of the children of Judah, under Nebuchadnezzar.

According to Jewish tradition, the books of the Kings were written by Jeremiah, to whom the word of the Lord first came in the thirteenth year of King Josiah, or 629 B. C. Others attribute the work to Ezra. Whoever the author may have been, the books are regarded as a compilation, from a number of source books, some of which are named; as, "the book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11: 41); "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (14: 29); and "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (15: 31). In the various books of the Old Testament, twenty or more such "source books" are mentioned by title. The exact date of the composition is uncertain. Some scholars think the books of the Kings were written before the fall of Jerusalem, and revised during or shortly after the captivity; others that they were written during that period, and after the release and implied death of King Jehoiachin, with which the record closes.

The narrative of the two books covers a time period of about four hundred fifty years.

The Hittites

Abimelech, mentioned in 1 Sam. 26: 6, was a Hittite; so was Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba. Reference is often made in the Old Testament to this people, as in 1 Kings 10: 29; yet only a few years ago, because the traces of their ancient cities were unrecognized and the territory they occupied was

unknown, scoffers denied their existence. However, when the Rosetta Stone had unlocked the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, and those on the temple at Karnak were read, men who had sneered at the Bible record were surprised to read of the wars of the Rameses with the Hittites. Still they were not altogether convinced; in spite of the evidence, they would not believe that the Hittites were a people of any strength or prominence.

Then came the finding of the clay tablets of Assyria, with their cuneiform writing, whose secrets the Behistun rock inscriptions had unlocked. When these old records were read, it was found that the Hittites were often mentioned. "Tiglath-pileser, of 1100 B. C., mentions them; Assur-nasir-apli, of 885 B. C., says that he collected tribute from them; and Sargon boasts that in the year 711 B. C. he captured the Hittite capital city of Karkemish, destroyed it, and brought the Hittite people to an end.

"At length, with all these evidences, the scholars acknowledged that the Hittites did exist. Now we know that this mysterious people once had large, fortified, walled cities, . . . and that their power was scarcely inferior to that of Assyria or of Egypt. . . . Thus a nation which played a prominent part in the history of the early world, but to which the scholar of a few years ago denied an existence, is now resuming a place in history. Another voice from beneath the soil of Asia is now calling out its long-silenced testimony."

The Stones of the Temple

"Great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" were brought at Solomon's command to lay the foundation of the house of the Lord. These stones were "of a lime formation, so white that when polished it resembles marble." Though the mountain on which Jerusalem is built is of this same rock, it was once supposed that the stones for the temple were brought, like the cedar beams from Lebanon, from a distance. It now appears that these "great stones" were hewed out of the rock and chiseled into shape by Solomon's masons, aided by the skilled workmen furnished by King Hiram, in a great quarry that extended beneath the city of Jerusalem itself. This cavern was unknown to Europeans until 1852. "Its entrance seems to have been a natural cave; but farther on, its broken walls, its

tunnel-like recesses, and the rock-hewn pillars supporting the roof, mark it as the work of man. . . . Scattered here and there upon the floor are hewn blocks, just as they were left by the quarrymen; upon them the marks of the chisel still seem fresh.”

From the nature and extent of this cavern, it is supposed that from the time when Jerusalem was first founded, the stone for its walls, temples, and other buildings was obtained here.

Sixteenth Week: April 16-22

- 16. 1 Kings 15, 16: Kings of Judah and Israel.
- 17. 1 Kings 17-19: Elijah; call of Elisha.
- 18. 1 Kings 20, 21: Benhadad's invasion; Naboth's vineyard.
- 19. 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 1: Death of Ahab; succeeding kings.
- 20. 2 Kings 2, 3: The chariot of fire.
- 21. 2 Kings 4, 5: Miracles of Elisha.
- 22. 2 Kings 6-8: Famine; plenty.

The Prophets

All through the history of Israel and Judah, the Lord sent warnings and reproofs to the people by the mouth of His prophets; and in order to gain a clear understanding of the history of those days, it is necessary to read the writings of these faithful men. "The Lord testified . . . by the hand of every prophet, and of every seer,"—warning, reproving, entreating His erring people. But largely in vain. "We have the written records of four prophets who tried to save Israel from Assyria, and failed,"—Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Joel, Isaiah, and Nahum succeeded in rescuing Judah from the power of Assyria; but Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah failed in their effort to save Judah from captivity by Babylon. In general, the result of their work is well expressed by the sorrowful question of Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report?"

Ancient Historical Records

A Pavement Slab.—Early in the reign of Omri, king of Israel, the power of Assyria began to increase. The first great king of this period was Assur-nasir-apli; and his son, Shalmaneser II, came to the throne in the closing days of the reign of Jehu. Hazael of Damascus, who obtained the throne of Syria by treachery and murder (2 Kings 8), is frequently mentioned in the records left by Shalmaneser. On an old pavement slab is preserved the record of an expedition against this Hazael by the Assyrian monarch. According to this account, Shalmaneser defeated Hazael in battle, killed his soldiers, captured his chariots and horses, destroyed his plantations and towns, and shut the fleeing monarch up in the city of Damascus. The inscription ends with the statement:

“At that time I received the tribute of the Tyrians and Sidonians, and of Jehu the son [successor] of Omri.”

The Black Obelisk.—Another interesting relic of that campaign is preserved in a small black stone obelisk, discovered by Layard in the great mound of Nimrud. The four sides of this obelisk are covered with pictures engraved in the stone, and above them are cuneiform inscriptions explaining their meaning. One of these pictures represents “a figure with marked Jewish features” kneeling before Shalmaneser; behind him are slaves bearing gifts. Over the group is this inscription:

“The tribute of Jehu the son of Omri, silver, gold, basins of gold, bowls of gold, cups of gold, buckets of gold, lead, a royal scepter, staves, I received.”

No mention is made, in the Bible, of Jehu's defeat before Shalmaneser. It may be, as one writer suggests, that in this inscription, we have “a bit of long-forgotten Hebrew history.” A motive for Jehu's submission is suggested by Mr. Price, who says, “The dangerous approach of Shalmaneser, and the invincible character of his army, forewarned Jehu that his surest method of deliverance would be to dispatch his envoys, even if he did not go himself, and pay the price of submission.”

The Moabite Stone.—About 850 B. C., King Mesha, mentioned in 2 Kings 3: 4, set up in a field near the ancient town of Dibon, in Moab, a monument of black basalt, commemorating certain victories over Israel. During all the centuries from that far-off day till 1868, the stone stood in that spot, bearing unharmed its wonderful inscription, which so clearly supplements the Scripture record.

August 19, 1868, this monument was discovered by a German missionary, who at once recognized its value. Through an agent of the French consulate at Jerusalem, a large sum of money was offered to the Arabs for it, but the Turkish officials interfered. In 1869, the Arabs lighted a fire under the stone, and when it was heated, poured cold water over it, breaking it into pieces, which they carried away as charms. A large proportion of these fragments were recovered; and with these and the aid of impressions taken before the stone was broken, the monument was restored, and its ancient inscription read. Here are a few sentences from it:

1. I (am) Mesha, son of Chemoshmelek, king of Moab, the Dibonite.
2. My father ruled over Moab thirty years, and I ruled after my father.

3. And I prepared this monument for Chemosh at Korkhah.

4. A monument [to celebrate] deliverance, because he saved me from all invaders, and because he let me see (my desire) upon all mine enemies.

5. Omri (was) king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days; for Chemosh was angry with his land.

6. His son succeeded him, and he also said, "I will oppress Moab."

10. The king of Israel had built for himself Ataroth;

11. But I warred against the city and took it.

12. And I slew all [the inhabitants of] the city, a spectacle for Chemosh and for Moab.

15. And Chemosh said to me, Go take Nebo against Israel.

16. And I went by night, and fought against it from early dawn until high noon.

17. And I took it, and slew all of it, seven thousand men and women.

Seventeenth Week: April 23-29

- 23. 2 Kings 9-11: Judgments on the house of Ahab.
- 24. 2 Kings 12-14: Death of Elisha.
- 25. 2 Kings 15-17: Captivity of the ten tribes.
- 26. 2 Kings 18, 19: Hezekiah's good reign.
- 27. 2 Kings 20, 21: Hezekiah's sickness and recovery.
- 28. 2 Kings 22, 23: The good reign of Josiah.
- 29. 2 Kings 24, 25: Chaldean invasion; captivity.

Tiglath-Pileser

In 2 Kings 15: 19, mention is made of "Pul the king of Assyria." Who was this king? No such name has been found in the ancient inscriptions of that land, though there is a record that Tiglath-pileser III led an invasion against Palestine, and received tribute from "Rezin of Damascus, Menahem of Samaria, and Hiram of Tyre." From this, it is inferred that "Pul" was another name for that monarch. This idea is borne out by a tradition that Tiglath-pileser III was not of the royal line, but a gardener named Pul, who became a soldier, and at last gained sufficient power to seize the throne. Naturally he would change his name, and he chose that of Tiglath-pileser, "a name borne by the most illustrious of the Assyrians."

In verse 29 of the same chapter, his royal name, Tiglath-pileser, is used. He came against Palestine, and took "Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria."

"Among the inscriptions found by Layard in the palace of Tiglath-pileser is one containing the record of the invasion of Palestine. It is somewhat mutilated, yet the lines which are preserved say that the Assyrian king captured Gilead, made it Assyrian territory, and placed it in charge of his officers; that Hanno, king of Gaza, fled to Egypt; that Samaria was captured; and then, to use Tiglath-pileser's own words: 'I deported to Assyria all of the inhabitants, together with their property.' . . . Thus do the royal records of Assyria supplement and confirm the historical portions of the Old Testament."

Captivity of the Ten Tribes

Tiglath-pileser III was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV, mentioned in 2 Kings 17: 3. "Of a few records from his reign," says Mr. Banks in "The Bible and the Spade," "one speaks

of a three years' expedition to foreign lands: it probably refers to his siege of Samaria. Until recent years it has been supposed that he was the Assyrian king who captured Samaria; but from the records of Sargon, his successor, we learn that he only began the siege; Sargon completed it.

"Sargon, the Assyrian king from 722 to 705 B. C., was the founder of a new dynasty, and the builder of the city of Khorsabad, in which his immense palace was discovered by Botta. Numerous well-preserved inscriptions upon stone lined the palace walls; two of them tell of the siege of Samaria and of the deportation of the Israelites. In one the king says:

" 'I besieged and captured the city of Samaria, and I carried away 27,280 of its inhabitants as captives. I took fifty of their chariots. I restored the city, and causing the inhabitants to become more in number than before, I stationed my lieutenants over them. I made the people of the lands which I had conquered, to dwell there, and I collected from them the same amount of tribute as from the Assyrians.' "

Review and Outline of First and Second Kings

The history given in these books falls naturally under three heads:

1. Solomon's Reign1 Kings 1-11
2. The Divided Kingdom1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17
3. The Kingdom of Judah2 Kings 18-25

Amplify this outline, and give references. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, had nineteen kings and nine dynasties. It is a noteworthy fact that not one of the kings of Israel was called good, while eight of the kings of Judah were so called. The kingdom lasted two hundred and fifty years, at the end of which time the people were carried into captivity by the great king Sargon of Assyria, and the kingdom came to an end.

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, had twenty rulers. As a kingdom, Judah lasted about four hundred years, but continued as a subject power until after Christ. The many classes of Jews in all parts of the world to-day are recognized as descendants of the kingdom of Judah. "The great fact which accounts for the preservation of Judah is that from that tribe and from the kingly line of David, Christ was to come. And so He did. His genealogy is that of the Davidic kings."

Eighteenth Week: April 30 to May 6

- 30. 1 Chron. 1-3: Genealogy.
- 1. 1 Chron. 4-6: Genealogy.
- 2. 1 Chron. 7-9: Genealogy.
- 3. 1 Chron. 10-12: Death of Saul; legions of David.
- 4. 1 Chron. 13-16: The ark brought to Jerusalem.
- 5. 1 Chron. 17-20: David desires to build God's house.
- 6. 1 Chron. 21-24: Gathering material for the temple.

The Books of the Chronicles

The title given to these books comes from the word *Chronicon*, given to them by Jerome, who called them "a chronicle of the whole of sacred history." The Hebrew name of the book is "Acts of the Days;" and in the Septuagint they were called by a title meaning "Of Things That Have Been Left Untold." It is customary to say of these books that they tell the "things omitted" from the records of First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings; but really they do much more. There is a close connection between all these records, but closer still is the connection between the story of Chronicles and that of the two books which immediately follow — Ezra and Nehemiah. Second Chronicles ends with the proclamation of Cyrus, king of Persia, which made possible the restoration of the temple of God at Jerusalem; and Ezra takes up the story at that point, and carries it forward.

For this reason, the authorship of the Chronicles is attributed by many commentators to Ezra. Others hold that the work was done by the priests; still others, that Ezra began the work, and Nehemiah completed it.

Whoever the chronicler, he introduced a new plan in his story. Up to this time, the history of the world, as recorded in the Bible books, is a continuous narrative; but the writer of Chronicles went back to the very beginning, and started with Adam.

The genealogical tables which form the first part of First Chronicles enabled the remnant Jews, now returning to Palestine, to trace their ancestry, and establish their title to the lands of their fathers. Above all, these genealogies were important in appointing the priests to their hereditary work, and maintaining the temple service. "They record the unbroken line of the chosen people for about 3,500 years."

Like the books of the Kings, First and Second Chronicles are largely a compilation from other works, no fewer than twelve other histories being named as the author's sources of information. "Everywhere a knowledge of the preceding books of the Bible is taken for granted, and many new and important facts are given."

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the books of the Chronicles are placed at the close, thus showing that by the men making this arrangement, they were regarded as the latest of the Sacred Writings. The date usually attributed to them is about 400 B. C.

Read Them Together

In addition to reading the daily assignments in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, it will be profitable to spend as much time as possible rereading, comparing, and reading again. Note "especially the points of agreement and the supplemental information by which the individual records are perfected and completed. All these books treat mainly of the same historical period and events, yet each book has its own specialty, and the whole contains but one history. Samuel is more biographical than historical, and narrates the formation of the kingdom, together with the life and times of Saul and David. The books of Kings contain the history of the theocracy, with brief descriptions of the character and conduct of the various monarchs and of the people. The books of Chronicles are more ecclesiastical in structure, and give full details of the order of public worship, the genealogies, and other matters of great importance to the Jewish people on their return from the Babylonian captivity."

Nineteenth Week: May 7-13

- 7. 1 Chron. 25-27: Various matters of order.
- 8. 1 Chron. 28, 29: David's charge to Solomon.
- 9. 2 Chron. 1-4: Preparation and building.
- 10. 2 Chron. 5-7: Dedication and acceptance.
- 11. 2 Chron. 8, 9: Splendor of Solomon's reign.
- 12. 2 Chron. 10-13: Reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah.
- 13. 2 Chron. 14-16: Reign of Asa.

Points to Remember

The contemporary history of the times of the kings of Israel and Judah, and the records preserved from still earlier times that have a bearing on the destiny of the chosen people, are of absorbing interest. Their value to us lies in the fact that they widen our horizon, and present a setting for the events recorded in the Bible. It is important, however, while giving due attention to such historical helps as we may have access to, to be careful not to miss the precious spiritual lessons to be gleaned from the daily reading.

The history of the men whose deeds are recorded in the Old Testament was not written, like the boasting proclamations of the heathen kings, to exalt man, or even that succeeding generations might know of the successes and failures of men in those days. The books of the Bible, and the events around which those books are written, are directly "connected with God's historical revelation, which culminated in Christ." Take Christ out of the Bible, and its meaning, its message, is gone. "It is from Christ, the central light, that illuminating rays are shed through the whole of Scripture; He is the central sun, who holds together all its various parts."

The books of the Chronicles are illuminated by striking figures of speech, enlivened with brief sketches of uplifting experience, and enriched by the most gracious assurances and promises. Note the vividness with which God's knowledge of the hearts of men is pictured in 2 Chron. 16: 9; the figurative answer sent by Joash to Amaziah (2 Chron. 25: 18, 19); David's refusal to present to the Lord an offering that had cost him nothing (1 Chron. 21: 18-25); the reasons for Hezekiah's success (2 Chron. 31: 21); an assurance that prayer is heard in heaven (2 Chron. 30: 27); and many others.

Shishak of Egypt

The invasion of Shishak, king of Egypt, mentioned in 2 Chron. 12: 2, was also spoken of in the record in Kings. (See 1 Kings 14: 25, 26.) He came against Jerusalem, raided the temple and the king's palace, and carried away much treasure. Shishak himself had a record made of that expedition, of which the attack on Jerusalem was a part. On one of the walls of the great temple at Karnak, he "inscribed a sculpture representing this campaign. He enumerates 156 places, towns, and fortresses that he captured. . . . In this sculpture the giant figure of Shishak is represented as holding in his left hand the ends of ropes, which bind long rows of captives neck to neck. Their hands are tied behind them, and the victor's right hand holds over others a rod with which he threatens them. The names of the conquered cities are inscribed on ovals or shields that cover the lower part of the body of each prisoner. Some of the most familiar names in this list are: Gaza, Taanach, Abel, Adullam, Beth-anath, Beth-horon, Aijalon, Gibeon."

These ancient inscriptions are another evidence of the historical accuracy of the Biblical record.

Twentieth Week: May 14-20

- 14. 2 Chron. 17-20: Reign of Jehoshaphat.
- 15. 2 Chron. 21-23: Jehoram; Ahaziah; Athaliah.
- 16. 2 Chron. 24, 25: Joash; the temple repaired; Amaziah.
- 17. 2 Chron. 26-28: Reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz.
- 18. 2 Chron. 29-31: The temple services reestablished.
- 19. 2 Chron. 32, 33: Invasion of Sennacherib.
- 20. 2 Chron. 34-36: Jerusalem destroyed; captivity.

Sennacherib of Assyria

This boastful monarch was the son and successor of the great Sargon, who had despoiled Samaria, and scattered Israel in Assyria, filling their places with tribute-paying peoples from the East. No doubt Sennacherib intended to complete the work begun by Sargon, and bring the remaining territory of Judah into subjection to Assyria.

His first activities, after coming to the throne, were exerted in establishing his authority in Lower Babylonia, where he pillaged seventy-five cities, a great number of small villages, and deported more than two hundred thousand captives. Having arranged things to his satisfaction in this territory, he turned his attention to the "West-land," as Palestine and the surrounding countries were called. According to his story, this, his third military expedition, was marked by one triumph after another. When he had subdued various nations, and deported large numbers of prisoners to Assyria, he led his legions against Jerusalem. Sennacherib's own account of this campaign, preserved in inscriptions on clay in his palace at Nineveh, is full of interest. He says:

"I drew near to Ekron; the lords and the nobles who had committed sin I slew, and on stakes all around the city I impaled their corpses. The people of the city who had done crime and wickedness I took captive. The rest of them who had not committed sin and wickedness, and who were not guilty, I set free. . . . But Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke — forty-six of his fenced cities and fortresses, and small towns in their vicinity without number, by breaking them down with battering-rams, and the blows of . . . and the strokes of axes, and hammers, I besieged and took; 200,150 persons, small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, large cattle, small cattle, without number, I brought

forth from the midst of them, and counted as spoil. As for Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, in Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut him up. I threw up forts against him, and whoever would come out of the gate of the city I turned back. . . . As for Hezekiah himself, the fear of the glory of my sovereignty overwhelmed him; and the Arabs and his other allies, whom he had brought to strengthen Jerusalem, the city of his royal residence, deserted him. Thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver, . . . great stores of lapis lazuli, couches of ivory, armchairs of ivory, with elephant's hide, ivory tusks, *ussu* wood, *urkarinu* wood, and the like, an immense treasure; and his daughters, his palace women, men singers, women singers, to Nineveh, my royal city, I made him bring; and for the delivery of the tribute, and rendering homage, he sent his ambassador."

The account of this invasion given in 2 Kings shows that Hezekiah did pay tribute to Sennacherib. This he did hoping to buy peace; but the treasure so easily secured only awakened the cupidity of the invader, and he decided to take the city that yielded such riches, and sent an army against Jerusalem. The Bible records tell the fate of the Assyrian hosts; but, like the war news sent out from the capitals of modern warring nations, Sennacherib's story is strangely silent concerning the disaster that caused him to return "with shame of face to his own land."

Outline and Review

Anciently the two books of Chronicles, like the double books of Samuel and the Kings, were regarded as one, and they may be so treated in reviewing them. Four distinct divisions may be made in outlining these books:

1. Introduction 1 Chron. 1-9
2. The Reign of David 1 Chron. 10-29
3. The Reign of Solomon 2 Chron. 1-9
4. The Kingdom of Judah 2 Chron. 10-36

If you have time, fill in the subordinate headings, with references.

Do not skip the genealogies. "The events incidentally mentioned in connection with them are more numerous and of more importance than the casual reader would imagine."

Twenty-First Week: May 21-27

21. Ezra 1-3: Foundations of second temple laid.
22. Ezra 4-6: The work of rebuilding hindered.
23. Ezra 7-10: Gracious decree of Artaxerxes.
24. Neh. 1-4: Rebuilding — praying, working, watching.
25. Neh. 5-8: The work finished.
26. Neh. 9-11: A solemn fast.
27. Neh. 12, 13: Abuses rectified; the Sabbath honored.

The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther

These three books belong together; for they all have to do with the same period of Jewish history, beginning with the decree of Cyrus to restore and build the temple in Jerusalem (B. C. 536), and closing with the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, 432 B. C.

The ten tribes of Israel, known as the Northern Kingdom, were carried into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B. C., and were lost to history. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Israel in three invasions, the first in 606 B. C., the second in 599 B. C., and the third in 586 B. C. At this latter date the temple was razed, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and those who escaped death were carried captive to Babylon. By the proclamation of Cyrus in 536, all the Jews who wished to do so were permitted to return to their own land, to rebuild the temple. Their return, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah, took place seventy years from the time of the first captivity.

The book of Daniel gives the connecting narrative between the closing verses of the last chapter of Second Chronicles and the proclamation of Cyrus. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk prophesied during this time, and in their writings we have preserved to us faithful pictures of the social, religious, and political condition of the Jews.

The book of Ezra contains a record of events that occurred about the time of the close of the exile of the Jews in Babylon. "It comprises accounts of the favors bestowed upon the Jews by Persian kings; of the rebuilding of the temple; of the mission of Ezra to Jerusalem, and his regulations and reforms."

The book of Ezra contains a verse that is of the highest importance to every one who wishes to understand the prophetic periods of Daniel 8 and 9,—the eighth verse of the

seventh chapter. The year 457 B. C., given in the margin, "is the starting point from which the 2,300 days (years) are to be reckoned. The going forth of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem is of itself an event that marks an epoch in this world's history, and makes the book one of absorbing interest, worthy of deep study."

The book of Nehemiah "is the last fragment of inspired Hebrew history." It gives the history of Nehemiah's great work of rebuilding the city wall, establishing the government, and carrying into effect the needed reforms, especially in regard to honoring the Sabbath. Incidentally, the book admits us to "a glance at the condition, moral and political, of the Jews; at the growing bitterness between them and the Samaritans; and at some scenes in Assyrian life. The account of the walls and gates in chapter 3 is among the most valuable documents for the settlement of the topography of ancient Jerusalem."

Of the authorship and history of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Amos R. Wells says: "From the fact that the first part of the book of Ezra is written in the first person, it is thought that Ezra himself wrote it. Others think that both this book and Nehemiah were written by others, but contain extracts from the first-hand accounts of the two leaders. In ancient times the two books were united, and in the Vulgate they are called First and Second Esdras. They are written in Hebrew, with the exception of certain letters and other quoted documents in Ezra, which are kept in the original Aramaic, or Chaldee. Ezra covers seventy-nine years; and Nehemiah, after an interval of about twelve years, continues the story."

Ezra and Nehemiah—the Men

The name "Ezra" means *help*. The famous scribe and priest bearing this name lived in Babylon in the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and by this monarch was commissioned to lead a large company of captive Jews to Jerusalem. Not only was a liberal provision of silver and gold and other offerings given him for the house of the Lord, but a royal decree commanded that he should receive all needed assistance from the keepers of the king's treasures beyond the river. Ezra was a reformer. He desired not only to rebuild the temple and re-establish its services, but to see the laws and customs of the ancient faith observed in the daily life of the chosen people.

The genealogy of Nehemiah is unknown, save that he was the son of Hachaliah, and presumably of the tribe of Judah. While he occupied a high office in the court of Persia, his heart was stirred by reports that came to his ears of conditions at Jerusalem. Obtaining a commission from the king, and promising to return to the court at a set time, he went to Jerusalem, and entered immediately upon his labors. Nehemiah was evidently a man of action. He could work as well as talk, execute as well as plan. "He was a man of profound piety, connecting everything, great or small, with the will of God. His prudence is equally marked; and there is no better example of constant dependence upon God, united with practical forethought. He was disinterested and unselfish; his wealth was used for public ends; and there is not the slightest reference to self apart from the common good."

Twenty-Second Week: May 28 to June 3

28. Esther 1-4: Conspiracy against the Jews.
29. Esther 5-7: Esther's plea; downfall of Haman.
30. Esther 8-10: Decree in favor of the Jews; victory.
31. Job 1, 2: Testing of Job.
 1. Job 3-5: Opening of discussion; first speech of Eliphaz.
 2. Job 6, 7: Job's answer to Eliphaz.
 3. Job 8-10: First speech of Bildad; answer of Job.

The Book of Esther

About sixty years intervene between the completion of the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel and the return of Ezra and his company to Jerusalem; during this time the events recorded in the book of Esther took place. We have no record of what occurred in Jerusalem during this period; but we know, from particulars given in the second part of Ezra, that the people had backslidden. However, the story of Esther has nothing to do with the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem, but with those who had chosen to remain in the land to which their fathers had been carried captive. The scene is laid in the Persian court, in the capital city of Susa, and involves the great king Ahasuerus, his minister of state, and other noble persons. This Ahasuerus is supposed to have been the king known in history as Xerxes, who reigned over Persia from 485 to 465 B. C. Early in his reign he made an attempt to conquer Greece, and was overwhelmingly defeated at Salamis in 480. He was capricious and cruel, and was finally murdered by his minister of state.

The authorship of the book of Esther is unknown. It was written in Hebrew, and by some has been attributed to Ezra. Others, taking into account the intimate knowledge of the personal affairs of Esther and Mordecai, believe it to have been written by Mordecai himself. Whoever the writer, he was familiar with the arrangement of "Shushan the palace"—that portion of the city of Shushan where the Persian kings made their summer home. Recent French excavations, laying bare the remains of these ancient buildings, show that "every detail is exact," and furnish a confirmation of the record, "the force of which it is hard to overestimate. It shows that the writer was well informed, and that his work is characterized by minute exactitude."

Esther is one of the two books of the Bible bearing a woman's name. While the name of God is nowhere mentioned, and no reference is made to the temple or the Jewish religion, the whole book is a record of God's special providence exercised in behalf of His chosen people, and bears in itself the evidence of its divine origin.

The "golden text" of the book is found in the last clause of verse 14, chapter 4: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Accepting this question as personal when confronted with what seem insurmountable difficulties, we may, like Esther, not only find deliverance, but also exalt the name of the Lord.

Esther is the last of the twelve historical books, which have been summarized as follows:

Joshua	Conquest
Judges	Deliverance
Ruth	Love
1 and 2 Samuel	Kingdom
1 and 2 Kings	Kings
1 and 2 Chronicles	Temple
Ezra	Return
Nehemiah	Rebuilding
Esther	Providence

The Book of Job

"This, the first of the so-called poetical books of the Bible, has a special and peculiar interest for the student of Holy Writ. It seems to have been written in the patriarchal age, probably by Moses. That Job was a real person, and the history we have concerning him is not, as some consider it to be, a fiction, but a truthful account, we have proof in both the Old and New Testaments. In Ezek. 14: 14, 20, he is mentioned as being as veritably an actual person as were Noah and Daniel. 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord.' So, as surely as there was a Noah who built an ark, and a Daniel who was in the lions' den, just so surely there was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. The testimony of James is no less positive: 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the

Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.' James 5: 11. We see by this that not only did such a man as Job live, but also that the history concerning him is correct.'—*Starr*.

Review and Outline for Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther

The book of Ezra has two divisions:

1. Rebuilding the Temple Chapters 1-6
2. Reforms of Ezra Chapters 7-10

The book of Nehemiah may be outlined as follows:

1. The Walls Rebuilt Chapters 1-7
2. Turning to God Chapters 8-10
3. Important Lists Chapters 11, 12: 1-26
4. Dedication of the Wall Chapter 12: 27-47
5. Return and Reforms of Nehemiah Chapter 13

The book of Esther presents a series of pictures. The reader will be interested to glance through the book, chapter by chapter, and write titles for the different scenes brought to mind. For the first chapter such titles as A Royal Feast, In the Court of the Palace, The Queen's Refusal, What Shall We Do? The Counsel of Memucan, The Royal Post, etc., naturally suggest themselves.

The story may be outlined under five heads:

1. Esther Made Queen Chapters 1, 2
2. The Plot of Haman Chapters 3, 4
3. Esther's Courage and Haman's Fall . Chapters 5-7
4. Elevation of Mordecai and the
Counter Decree Chapter 8
5. The Jews Delivered Chapters 9, 10

Twenty-Third Week: June 4-10

4. Job 11-14: First Speech of Zophar; answer of Job.
5. Job 15-17: Second speech of Eliphaz; answer of Job.
6. Job 18, 19: Second speech of Bildad; answer of Job.
7. Job 20, 21: Second speech of Zophar; answer of Job.
8. Job 22-24: Third speech of Eliphaz; answer of Job.
9. Job 25-28: Third speech of Bildad; answer of Job.
10. Job 29-31: Conclusion of Job's answer.

The Book of Job

The name "Job" signifies the persecuted, hated, or afflicted one. The patriarch bearing this name is generally thought to have lived before the days of Moses, and some believe he lived before the days of Abraham.

The book of Job has been called "a dramatic poem, set in a frame of epic narrative." By some, it is supposed to have been written by the patriarch himself, with an introduction and an ending by Moses. "There is abundant internal evidence that the scenes and events recorded were real scenes and events to the writer. He gives the discussions either as he heard them, or as they had been repeated over and over in many an ancient consensus. The very modes of transmission show the deep impression it had made in all the East as a veritable as well as marvelous event."

Every book that endures must have a purpose; its foundations must be laid in some great truth that is vital to humanity. A study of the book of Job shows it to be a discussion of a great problem—"What is the intention of Divine Providence in allowing the good to suffer?" Its object is to show that, "although goodness has a natural tendency to secure a full measure of temporal happiness, yet in its essence it is independent of such a result. Selfishness in some form is declared to be the basis on which all apparent goodness rests. That question is tried in the case of Job."

In the question asked by Satan, "Doth Job fear God for naught?" the great question to be considered is stated; namely, "Can goodness exist irrespective of reward?" Satan received permission to test Job on this point; and the patriarch, in his deep affliction, smitten with a grievous disease, and advised even by his wife to curse God and die, retained his allegiance to Jehovah. The great message of the book is that "no afflic-

tion from without can destroy the excellence of the character that obeys the law of God."

Of this book Amos R. Wells says: "The poem itself is a noble discussion of the reasons for suffering. In speeches regularly recurring, each answered in turn by Job, the three friends of the patriarch urge that the cause of all suffering is sin. Elihu argues that all suffering is certainly for the good of the sufferer, and at length God Himself speaks, and Job becomes submissive and repentant."

And Carlyle pays to it this noble tribute: "I call the book of Job, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels indeed as if it were not Hebrew, such a noble universality, different from patriotism and sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book; all men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never ending problem — man's destiny and God's way with him here in the earth. And all in such free flowing outlines, grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody and repose of reconciliation. Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation, oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit."

Job is the first of the five *poetical books* of the Old Testament. Some writers make a further division of these books, and apply the title "wisdom books" to Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

Twenty-Fourth Week: June 11-17

11. Job 32-34: First part of Elihu's argument.
12. Job 35-37: Conclusion of argument of Elihu.
13. Job 38-42: Address of Jehovah; answers of Job; conclusion.
14. Psalms 1-7: Contrast of the godly and the wicked.¹
15. Psalms 8-15: God's glory magnified by His works.
16. Psalms 16-19: Prayer and praise.
17. Psalms 20-22: Blessing and confidence.

The Book of Psalms

The present Hebrew title of this book is *Tehillim*, which means "praises," or "songs of praise." The familiar English word means "songs set to music," and the titles to many of the psalms contain references to musical terms and instruments. The book was really the hymn book of the Jews, arranged for use in the temple service.

The book contains one hundred and fifty psalms, whose composition extended over a thousand years, from Moses to the close of the captivity. "One psalm is attributed to Moses, seventy-three to David, two to Solomon, twelve to Asaph (one of David's musicians), eleven to the sons of Korah, and one each to Heman and Ethan. Thirteen titles tell on what occasion the psalm was written. A number of most precious psalms are prophetic of Christ."

In the Revised Version, in harmony with Hebrew usage, the book of Psalms is divided into five parts, or books. Book 1 includes the first forty-one psalms; book 2 includes psalms 42-72; book 3 ends with psalm 89; book 4 ends with psalm 106; and book 5 includes the remaining psalms. The collection is often called "The Psalms of David," because he was the greatest of the sweet singers of Israel, and also because the first division, or book, of the psalms was written by him.

"There is no other book of praise," says one writer, "so pregnant with expression of the heart's emotion under all the vicissitudes of life, or so adapted to all climes and ages, as to be the universal medium of praise for all nations of the world."

¹ Titles will be given for only the first psalm in each day's reading. It will be a good plan, after reading each psalm, to write a title for it, and make brief notes of such points as you wish especially to remember.

“The book begins with benediction, and ends with praise — first, blessings to man, and then glory to God.”

Outline of the Book of Job

When you have finished the reading of this wonderful book, take a little time to summarize its contents. Make a list of the characters introduced, and mark what seems to you the most impressive statement of each one who speaks.

The book is naturally divided into five parts, thus:

1. The Prologue Chapters 1-3
2. The Discussion Chapters 4-31
3. The Speech of Elihu Chapters 32-37
4. The Divine Intervention Chapters 38-41
5. Job's Restoration Chapter 42

Study this arrangement, and fill in the subordinate topics and references. For example, under “The Prologue,” put (a) “Prosperity of Job;” (b) “Scene in Heaven;” (c) “Job Afflicted.” Follow each by references and brief explanatory sentences.

Twenty-Fifth Week: June 18-24

18. Psalms 23-30: The shepherd psalm.
19. Psalms 31-35: Confidence in the Lord.
20. Psalms 36-39: God's goodness and mercy.
21. Psalms 40-45: The acceptable sacrifice.
22. Psalms 46-50: God our refuge.
23. Psalms 51-55: A prayer for cleansing.
24. Psalms 56-61: Trusting in Jehovah.

Comfort of the Psalms

"The psalms are precious because they are so personal. We can make them our own so easily. When Edward Irving lay dying, he repeated over and over again the twenty-third psalm. It was his own. Another dying saint said of this psalm, 'Every word is personal to me, personal to my faith, to my soul.' So in sorrow we can come to the psalms for comfort. They feed all our moods."—*Amos R. Wells.*

The Poetry of the Psalms

The book of Psalms is the second of the five poetical books of the Bible. "Hebrew poetry is not constituted by rhyme, nor by appreciable rhythm; but it is for the most part elegant and elevated in style, often indeed sublime, the manner of expression, the choice of words, and the structure of the sentences being peculiar and characteristic. . . . The poetry of the psalms is essentially lyrical in character, expressive of the purest and most profound thoughts and sentiments which could be evoked under the old covenant. These inspired compositions may be characterized as the very heart of the Old Testament, an outpouring of lamentation, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, often uttered in prophetic language. They are, in fact, a mirror of the faith, love, and hope of the true Israelite, an 'epitome of the Bible adapted to the purposes of devotion, wherein man may speak to God in the very words which God Himself has inspired.' "

In the Revised Version, the psalms are properly printed in poetic form. Though there is no verbal rhyme in the lines, there "is a rhyme of thought, and there was a song cadence and rhythm in the words."

It will be noticed that many of the psalms have inscriptions of various kinds; as, "Set to the Gittith," "Set to Muth-

labben," etc. One Bible commentator explains these as follows: "Some are called *Michtam*, 'golden poem;' or *Maschil*, 'choice ode.' Psalms 6 and 12 are on *Sheminith*, 'the octave or bass,' for male voices. The forty-sixth is on *Alamoth*, 'after the manner of maidens,' or a soprano song. The fourth is set to *Neginoth*, 'stringed instruments.' Psalm 9 is set to the tune, 'Death of a Son;' psalm 22 to the tune, 'Hind of the Morning;' psalm 45 to the tune, 'The Lilies;' psalm 56 to the tune, 'The Far-Off Dove in Silent Lands.' "

The word "selah," which occurs so many times in the psalms, is believed to relate in some way to the music to which the psalms were set, or to have been used as a direction for the singers to be silent or pause, while the musicians played an interlude. Others give the word the meaning of "amen."

Twenty-Sixth Week: June 25 to July 1

- 25. Psalms 62-67: Confidence in God.
- 26. Psalms 68-71: Prayer on removing the ark.
- 27. Psalms 72-77: Prayer of David for Solomon.
- 28. Psalms 78-80: God's dealings with Israel.
- 29. Psalms 81-85: An exhortation to praise.
- 30. Psalms 86-89: A prayer of David.
- 1. Psalms 90-99: Brevity of human life.

How the Hebrew Psalter Grew

“The Hebrew Psalter was formed by a gradual growth. It appears that even the individual psalms gradually grew from a few lines to the length of stately songs. There is plain evidence that there existed originally a number of smaller collections of psalms, and that these were brought together in the five books which make up the Psalter. It was probably a process like the accumulation of the individual songs into the different parts of the modern ‘Gospel Hymns,’ first number one, then number two, and so on to number five, and then a combination of the five parts into one volume. The titles of the psalms indicate that those of them attributed to the same author were placed consecutively in the larger collections. For example, book three consists of two minor collections, one attributed to Asaph and the other to the sons of Korah; and book five consists of a group of pilgrim songs and a group of hallelujah songs, each apparently at one time a distinct songbook.”—*Armstrong*.

Influence of the Psalms

“Between the first verse of Matthew’s Gospel and the last verse of John’s Revelation there are two hundred and eighty-three quotations from the Old Testament. One hundred and sixteen of them are from the Psalms. It was the first book which the early church put into the hands of her young converts, the primer of her religious teaching. . . .

“With the music of psalms the shepherds and plowmen cheered their toil in ancient Palestine; and to the same music the Gallic boatmen kept time as they rowed their barges against the swift current of the Rhone. A psalm supplied the daily grace with which the early Christians blessed their food; and the same psalm was repeated by the communicants as they went to the Lord’s table. Chrysostom fleeing into exile; Martin

Luther going to Worms; George Wishart facing the plague at Dundee; Wycliffe on his sick bed, surrounded by his enemies; John Bunyan in Bedford gaol; William Wilberforce in a crisis when all his most strenuous efforts seemed in vain, and his noble plans were threatened with ruin,—all stayed their hearts and renewed their courage with verses from the psalms.

“The Huguenots at Dieppe marched to victory chanting the sixty-eighth psalm; and the same stately war song sounded over the field of Dunbar. It was a psalm that Alice Benden sang in the darkness of her Canterbury dungeon; and the lips of the Roman Paulla, faintly moving in death, breathed their last sigh in the words of a psalm. The motto of England’s proudest university is a verse from the Psalms; and a sentence from the same book is written above the loneliest grave on earth, among the snows of the arctic circle. It was with the fifth verse of the thirty-first psalm that our Lord Jesus commended His soul into the hands of God; and with the same words Stephen, Huss, Columbus, Luther, and Melancthon — yea, and many more saints of whom no man knoweth — have bid their farewell to earth.”— *Henry Van Dyke*.

Twenty-Seventh Week: July 2-8

2. Psalms 100-105: Serve the Lord with gladness.
3. Psalms 106-110: His mercy endureth forever.
4. Psalms 111-118: God's glorious and gracious works.
5. Psalm 119: Praise, love, power, and use of God's word.
6. Psalms 120-134: Psalms of degrees.
7. Psalms 135-140: Praise and thanksgiving.
8. Psalms 141-150: Prayer for acceptance.

The Praise of Prayer

"The one hundred and seventh psalm was written, in all probability, just after the close of the captivity, when the Hebrews had come back to their dear country. And if we are seeking a theme for it, we can find none so appropriate as 'The Praise of Prayer.' For this is the theme with which it is concerned, and the spirit with which it is filled. One after another the beautiful pictures of praying men and their great deliverances rise in the psalmist's verse. We see the divine mercy flowing down to meet the human supplications; and the refrain which comes back again and again is this:

" 'Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble,
And He delivered them out of their distresses.'

"The first three verses of the psalm refer especially to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. If any one ought to have a deep and lively sense of the divine goodness, it was the people whom Jehovah had 'redeemed from the hand of the adversary, and gathered from the lands' of their dispersion.

"Then the psalm takes a wider sweep, and begins, in the fourth verse, to describe the power of prayer in the most varied scenes of human life, and the readiness of God to deliver those who call upon Him from every form of trouble."—*Henry Van Dyke*.

Psalm 119

"In psalm 119 we find the peculiarity of alliteration, the chapter being divided into twenty-two sections of eight verses each, and each verse in each section in the original writing beginning with the letter of the Hebrew alphabet standing at the head of the section. The alliteration shows the psalm to be divided into verses. It is well known that the books of the

Bible were not generally divided into either chapters or verses until long after they were written. But the fact that the book of Psalms was thus divided may doubtless have suggested the propriety of so dividing the other books of the Bible, and certainly it is a very convenient and helpful arrangement. . . . The one hundred and nineteenth psalm is the most noted of all inspired productions that set forth the excellencies of the law of God. Every one of the one hundred and seventy-six verses seems in some way to speak of the commandments of Jehovah.”—*Starr*.

The Songs of Degrees

Fifteen psalms (120 to 134) are in the Authorized Version called Songs of Degrees, and in the Revised Version, Songs of Ascents. Many explanations of these terms have been made, two of which are here given. Dr. Henry Van Dyke says:

“The interpretation which is followed by the best modern scholars refers the word [“degrees,” or “ascents”] to the successive stages of the pilgrimage which the Jews were accustomed to make, thrice every year, to the temple on Mount Zion. On such journeys it would be natural to beguile the tedium of the way, or to cheer the nightly encampment, by the singing of familiar ballads. The ‘singableness’ of these fifteen psalms, ‘their freshness, their brilliant color, their allusions, their reflection of the homely phrase and surrounding of the folk,’ make them fit for such a purpose. And we may feel quite sure that we have here a brief collection of the popular songs which were used in this way,—‘Songs of the Up-Goings,’ or, as they have been called by one of our best expositors, ‘Pilgrim Psalms.’ ”

Others believe these psalms to have formed a collection used by the two hundred singers who accompanied the Jews returning from Babylon to Jerusalem.

It is not unlikely that both these explanations are true. It is still the custom in the East for pilgrims and companies of natives, “traveling together through the open country and along mountain paths, especially during the night, to break out into singing some of their favorite songs. . . . Something like this may have often rendered vocal the dreary ascent to Jerusalem. It is common in that country to travel in the night during the summer, and we know that the Hebrew pilgrims

journeyed in large companies; and it would be strange indeed if sometimes they did not seek relief from the oppressive solitude by singing the beautiful songs of Zion."

A spiritual application of these psalms has been made by one Bible student, who "defines the fifteen degrees of going up out of the valley of weeping to the presence of God to be, (1) affliction; (2) looking to God; (3) joy in communion; (4) invocation; (5) thanksgiving; (6) confidence; (7) patient waiting for deliverance; (8) God's grace and favor; (9) fear of the Lord; (10) martyrdom; (11) hatred of sins; (12) humility; (13) desire for the coming of Christ; (14) concord and charity; (15) constant blessing of God."

Review of Psalms

Take time to review the book of Psalms, marking the five divisions already mentioned, and noting the authorship of the psalms in each group.

Twenty-Eighth Week: July 9-15

9. Prov. 1-3: The benefits of wisdom.
10. Prov. 4-7: Instruction of a father; etc.
11. Prov. 8-10: The call of wisdom.
12. Prov. 11-13: A false balance; wise maxims.
13. Prov. 14-16: Virtues and vices.
14. Prov. 17-19: Wisdom and folly.
15. Prov. 20-24: Temperance; a good name; etc.

The Book of Proverbs

This book takes its name, in Hebrew, from its first word, *marshal*, which originally meant "a comparison." The same word is sometimes translated "parable," and sometimes, as here, "proverb."

In 1 Kings 4: 32 we are told that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs. Less than one third of this number, however, are preserved to us in this book; and part of these are credited to other authorship, as is seen in the headings of the last two chapters.

As a whole, the book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings relating to the common experiences of everyday life. It deals with our duties to our families, our neighbors, our friends, and the faithful performance of our service to God, being, in fact, "a manual of practical rules of life, as the book of Psalms is a manual of daily devotion." Modesty, chastity, temperance, forbearance, gentleness, industry, honesty, and other virtues are placed before us in vivid language. Praise and flattery are sweet to the human heart, but it is loath to accept reproof. The necessity of submission to correction is one of the most prominent lessons set forth in the Proverbs. The woes of intemperance are clearly portrayed, and the warnings against this sin are appropriate to all time.

The wisdom of Proverbs fits every phase of human experience, but it is especially valuable to those starting out on the highway of life. Amos R. Wells says: "Young people should read the book of Proverbs at least once a month. A proverb is condensed wisdom, and this book is full of the richest moral wisdom of the ages. We may listen to what the race has learned by experience, and profit by it, or we may try sin and pleasure for ourselves, and suffer. Proverbs is for the wise person who knows enough to listen when experience speaks."

Arrangement of Proverbs

The book may be divided into three parts, with two appendices, thus:

1. Chapters 1-9. These "form a connected didactic poem, in which wisdom is praised, and the youth exhorted to devote himself to her."

2. Chapters 10-24. This section is subdivided into three parts, thus: (*a*) chapters 10 to 22: 16, consisting of "a collection of single proverbs and detached sentences;" (*b*) chapters 22: 17 to 24: 22, "a more connected didactic poem, with an introduction;" and (*c*) chapter 24: 23-34, introduced with the inscription, "These things also belong to the wise," a collection of unrelated maxims forming an appendix to the preceding.

3. Chapters 25-29. This is a collection of Solomon's proverbs which the copyists of Hezekiah's court transcribed. Chapters 30, 31, are by some regarded as two appendices to the book. Chapter 30 is ascribed to "Agur the son of Jakeh," an unknown Hebrew sage; and the first nine verses of chapter 31 are called "The words of King Lemuel," likewise unknown. The last 22 verses of chapter 31 are an acrostic eulogy of a virtuous woman, each verse beginning, in the original, with one of the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Twenty-Ninth Week: July 16-22

16. Prov. 25-27: Humility and forgiveness.
17. Prov. 28-31: Impiety and religious integrity.
18. Eccl. 1-4: Vanity of human endeavor; etc.
19. Eccl. 5-8: Vanity of riches; benefits of patience.
20. Eccl. 9-12: Mysteries of providence; etc.
21. Song of Solomon 1-4: Christ and His church.
22. Song of Solomon 5-8: Christ and His church.

The Book of Ecclesiastes

This is the third of the so-called wisdom books of the Old Testament, and the fourth of the poetic group. Its Hebrew title is *Koheleth*, which is also applied by the writer of the book to himself. The usual definition is "the preacher," or "a person who draws an audience that he may address." Our word "Ecclesiastes" comes from a Greek term meaning "assembly."

Ecclesiastes sets forth the sad results of disobedience. In form, it is a discussion, or sermon, with a clearly stated subject, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion; but it is really more than a sermon. It is "the confession of a man of wide experience looking back upon his past life and looking out upon the disorders and calamities which surround him. The writer is a man who has sinned in giving way to selfishness and sensuality, but who has through all this been under the discipline of a divine education, and has learned from it the lesson which God meant to teach him."

Ecclesiastes is called "a book of experience." Mrs. E. G. White says: "By the spirit of inspiration, the king recorded for after generations the history of his wasted years, with their lessons of warning. And thus, although the seed of his sowing was reaped by his people in harvests of evil, his life work was not wholly lost. . . . Solomon's later writings reveal that as he realized more and still more the wickedness of his course, he gave special attention to warning the youth against falling into the errors that had led him to squander for naught Heaven's choicest gifts."

The Song of Songs

"This book, like the rest of Scripture, is to be read with seriousness. The holiest and most spiritually minded have

naturally delighted most in this book, in which they find most of their Beloved and their Friend.”—*Homiletic Commentary*.

“The church has ever, in her days of earnestness and special devotion, used the Song of Solomon. It has been the thermometer of her condition; when and where her energy and love were strong, then and there the Song of Songs became her mode and form of expression.”—*E. Monroe*.

“The Song of Solomon is an idyl, or rather a suite of seven idyls woven into a beautiful unity. . . . Its purpose is to reveal the incomparable strength of a chaste and sincere affection, which no splendor can dazzle and no flattery seduce; to reveal the purity, the sanctity, and the eternity of true love; and to set forth, under the figure of the bride and bridegroom in an earthly love story, the supreme loveliness of Christ — the object too large for the heart — and the inseparable attachment between Jehovah and Israel, Christ and the church, the soul and its Saviour.”—*Martin Anstey*.

Review

Review the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, marking the texts that have been of special help in your reading.

Thirtieth Week: July 23-29

- 23. Isa. 1-4: The Jerusalem vision; impending calamities.
- 24. Isa. 5-7: The parable of the vineyard.
- 25. Isa. 8-10: Exhortations and warnings.
- 26. Isa. 11-14: Birth and kingdom of Messiah.
- 27. Isa. 15-19: Burden of Moab; Damascus; Egypt.
- 28. Isa. 20-23: Doom of Babylon; Edom; Arabia; Tyre.
- 29. Isa. 24-26: God's judgments; the earth restored.

Isaiah — the Man

Isaiah, "the prophet of the coal of fire," whose name in Hebrew means "Jehovah's salvation," was one of the most distinguished of the Hebrew prophets. He prophesied during the reigns of four kings, beginning his work "in the year that King Uzziah died," and continuing it during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The time covered by his active work is variously estimated at from thirty-nine to fifty-five years.

Very little is known of Isaiah's personal history, but tradition makes him a member of the royal household in the reign of King Manasseh. He was married, and had two sons.

The prophet "seems to have lived and prophesied wholly at Jerusalem, and disappears from history after the accounts contained in chapter 39. A tradition among the Talmudists and fathers relates that he was sawn asunder during the reign of Manasseh; and this tradition is embodied in an apocryphal book called 'The Ascension of Isaiah.' " Speaking of the attempts of the wicked Manasseh to silence every protest against his evil course, Mrs. E. G. White says, "One of the first to fall was Isaiah, who for over half a century had stood before Judah as the appointed messenger of Jehovah." Reference to the prophet's martyrdom is supposed to be made in Heb. 11: 37.

"Isaiah is appropriately named 'the evangelical prophet,' and the fathers called his book 'The Gospel According to St. Isaiah.' In it the wonderful person of Immanuel,—'God with us,'—His beneficent life, His atoning death, and His triumphant and everlasting kingdom, are minutely foretold. The simplicity, purity, sweetness, and sublimity of Isaiah, and the fullness of his predictions respecting the Messiah, give him the preëminence among the Hebrew prophets and poets."

The vision of this prophet "is not restricted to his own nation and his own times, but he regards all nations and all times. 'Nowhere can we find the promise of the Messiah more clearly announced; nowhere is the kingdom of the Messiah depicted in colors more lifelike and abiding. His prophecies form, as it were, a bridge between the old covenant and the new.'"

Isaiah — the Book

Isaiah's wonderful prophecy, the first of the major prophetic books, is regarded as "the masterpiece of Hebrew literature," but its message is to mankind. The style of the book is exalted and majestic, and certain passages are noted for their dignity and beauty. The ode of triumph in chapter 14 (verses 3-23) is said to be "one of the most poetical in all literature."

One commentator says: "For versatility of expression and brilliancy of imagery, Isaiah had no superior, not even a rival. His style marks the climax of Hebrew literary art. Both his periods and his descriptions are most finished and sublime. Beauty and strength are characteristic of his entire book."

As you read this book, observe the promises that illumine its pages,—promises of the coming Messiah, personal promises of saving help and overcoming power, promises of the second advent and of the new heavens and the new earth,—and mark them for further study.

Thirty-First Week: July 30 to August 5

- 30. Isa. 27-29: Divine care; gospel blessings.
- 31. Isa. 30-33: Rebellion and obedience contrasted.
 - 1. Isa. 34-37: Day of vengeance; Sennacherib's invasion.
 - 2. Isa. 38-40: Hezekiah's respite; gospel blessings.
 - 3. Isa. 41-44: Messiah; comforting promises.
 - 4. Isa. 45-48: Cyrus; judgments on Babylon.
 - 5. Isa. 49-51: Deliverance.

Isaiah — His Times and His Message

Isaiah lived in a critical time in the history of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. When he began his work, the Northern Kingdom "was outwardly rich and prosperous, but inwardly, socially, politically, and morally corrupt." It soon went to pieces, with a crash. Shalmaneser IV, king of Assyria, began the siege against Samaria (2 Kings 18: 9); and three years later Sargon II, his successor, took the city, conquered the land, and deported the people.

As already noted, the work of this prophet extended through the reigns of four kings of Judah,—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Of this period, H. T. Sell says:

"The reigns of Uzziah and Jotham were like the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. It was an age of Oriental magnificence, show, and luxury; the poor were oppressed by the rich; the simplicity of the old religion was gone; public morality was relaxed. The boundaries of the kingdom were extended; but the old distinctive worship, which had made Judah great, was disappearing. Ahaz, who followed Jotham, was superstitious and cowardly. Religion reached its lowest ebb. Isaiah lifted his voice in vain against these evils. When the Assyrians threatened the Northern Kingdom, and the Northern Kingdom threatened Ahaz, he refused the counsel of Isaiah to keep still and trust God, but sought an alliance with the Assyrians, which brought about the destruction of Israel, and made Judah a vassal of Assyria. Hezekiah, who succeeded Ahaz, introduced reforms, and listened to Isaiah when the Assyrians again invaded Palestine. Sennacherib's army was destroyed by God before it came to Jerusalem. Manasseh, succeeding Hezekiah, undid his good work, and permitted the old evils to return."

Concerning the message of Isaiah's prophecy, G. Campbell Morgan says:

“The living message of this book to our own age is that submission to the government of God is the one sufficient condition for the fulfillment of all human life, whether it be social, national, or racial. It declares, moreover, that the only hope of the restoration of man, bruised and broken by sin, is centered in the grace of God. . . .

“Having been brought by grace into right relationship to government, through submission to government in order to the reception of the gifts of grace, we live henceforth within that government in the power of that grace. We submit to His government and enter into His grace. We stand in His grace, in order to obey His government.

“The revelation of this book is that of the throne of God. It matters not where we open it, whether we read the message of fiery denunciation, or the song of the coming deliverance; whether we hear the chariot wheels of swift and awful judgment, or listen to the song that heralds the dawning of the day of restoration; in every case, message or song comes from the throne. The Presence occupying the throne cannot be defined, but in the midst is a Lamb as it had been slain. ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.’ ”

Thirty-Second Week: August 6-12

6. Isa. 52-55: Sufferings of Christ; gospel invitation.
7. Isa. 56-58: Blessings of Sabbath keeping.
8. Isa. 59-62: Reproofs; promises; blessings.
9. Isa. 63-66: Gentiles called; new heavens and new earth.
10. Jer. 1-3: The call of the prophet.
11. Jer. 4-6: Exhortations; lamentations; judgments.
12. Jer. 7-9: Call to repentance; sin and punishment.

Isaiah — Review and Outline

Because of its wealth of references to the coming Messiah, the book of Isaiah has been called "the fifth Gospel." Glance through its pages, chapter by chapter, and note these promises. The book is the longest in the Bible save one, the Psalms, having sixty-six chapters — one for each book of the Bible. In this connection, it is interesting to note that one of the most common methods of arranging the contents of Isaiah is to divide the book into two parts, with 39 chapters in the first part, and 27 in the second, thus:

1. Prophecy and History Chapters 1-39
2. "The Book of Consolations" Chapters 40-66

"The first part is made up of those prophecies and historical accounts which Isaiah wrote during the period of his active exertions, when he mingled in the public concerns of the rulers and the people, and acted as the messenger of God to the nation." These single prophecies, given at different times, are here brought together into one collection. The second part deals with future events. "The subjects particularly foretold are: the deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus, about two hundred years before his birth, and the overthrow of their oppressors; the return to Judea, and the establishment of their ancient polity; the coming, character, appointment, sufferings, and glory of the Messiah; the downfall of idolatry, and the call of the Gentile world; the wickedness of the Jews consummated in their rejection of Messiah, and the consequent rejection of them by God; their future conversion and recovery, and the final triumphant perfection of the church."

The Prophet of Sorrows

Jeremiah, called "the prophet of the bleeding heart and of the iron will," was very young when he received the call (627 B. C.) that placed him among the prophets, to which position he had been consecrated by God Himself before his birth. "I cannot speak: for I am a child," said the youth; but God did not excuse him because of his tender years. Wonderful indeed was the ordination of the young prophet, and the solemn charge laid upon him; wonderful, also, the life of service that followed. He began to prophesy in the reign of the good king Josiah, continuing his ministry through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. Even after the captivity, his voice was raised in faithful warning and reproof. "Like a fenced wall," he performed the duty that was laid upon him, for forty-two years steadfastly giving the word of the Lord to kings, nobles, and people.

Jeremiah came of the priestly line, and lived in the Levite village of Anathoth, midway between Michmash and Jerusalem. King Josiah, himself a young man, worked with Jeremiah for the abolishment of idol worship and the carrying out of other reforms; but after his death, the people reverted to their sinful practices, and the life of the prophet was filled with sorrow.

The thorny path of the reformer was the same in Jeremiah's day as it has ever been. Pashur, "chief governor of the house of the Lord," had him beaten and put in the stocks; priests and prophets alike declared, "This man is worthy to die;" the written roll, which he inscribed at the word of the Lord, was slashed with a penknife, and cast into the fire. "His office was like that of a minister obliged to accompany a criminal to the scaffold," intensified by the grief he would have felt had that criminal been his own father. "Never did a man who loved his country and his God have more indignities heaped upon him for trying to be faithful to both."

The character of Jeremiah "is most interesting," says Canon Cook. "We find him sensitive to a painful degree, timid, shy, hopeless, desponding, but never flinching from duty. . . . Timid in resolve, he was unflinching in execution; as fearless when he had to face the whole world as he was dispirited and prone to murmuring when alone with God. Judged by his own estimate of himself, he was feeble, and his mission a failure; really, in the hour of action and when duty called him, he was

in very truth 'a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land.' He was a noble example of the triumph of the moral over the physical nature."

The Times of Jeremiah

The times have always developed the man, and the times of Jeremiah were no exception. When the prophet was born, says H. T. Sell: "Assyria and Egypt were disputing the sovereignty of the world. Before Jerusalem was destroyed, Assyria's power had been shattered by Babylon. Egypt under Pharaoh Necho II, daring to dispute the might of this new world power, suffered a disastrous defeat at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B. C. Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar was now mistress of the world. Jeremiah, whose message was to the nations, foresaw these changes and looked even beyond them; he predicted that even great Babylon after seventy years should fall, and a new power take its place. . . . He looked beyond the present great nations; beyond the present Judah, disobedient and ungrateful, and saw the rise of a kingdom greater than all, under a King who should sit upon the throne of David, and execute judgment and justice."

Thirty-Third Week: August 13-19

13. Jer. 10-13: Folly of idolatry; the linen girdle.
14. Jer. 14-16: Pleadings; types of doom.
15. Jer. 17-19: Types of the potter and the earthen vessel.
16. Jer. 20-23: A message of doom; Christ the Branch.
17. Jer. 24-26: Type of good and bad figs.
18. Jer. 27-29: Type of bands and yokes.
19. Jer. 30-32: Deliverance and return promised.

A Man Who Was Certain

“Jeremiah was a man who was certain. He is often mentioned as ‘the weeping prophet.’ Far more fittingly could he be called ‘the assertive prophet.’ He would follow his belief to any length; he trusted it implicitly, and imperiously demanded that all others trust it implicitly.

“Belief, with him, meant expression, and truth meant action. He was the most dramatic of preachers. He carried a new girdle to the Euphrates and buried it. After many days, he returned to the Euphrates and found his girdle ruined. ‘Thus,’ said he, ‘will the Lord mar your pride, O Judah, O Jerusalem!’ He smashed an earthen bottle before the people, and cried, ‘Thus will the Lord break this people, and this city!’ There is not in all the world a more vigorous piece of writing than the prophecies of Jeremiah.

“He followed his beliefs with his money. While the army of Nebuchadnezzar was encamped around Jerusalem, he bought at the old-time prices the very ground where their tents were spread, as proof of his certainty that peace was coming.

“He followed his beliefs, though they led him into ignominy, though they appeared treasonable, though they contravened popular prejudice and royal desires. What of that? One was with him who was more than all besides.

“He followed his beliefs so far as to record them. He would stand by them to the end of time. Jehoiakim might slash the roll to bits and burn it in his brazier. What of it? There was other parchment, and other ink, and the second roll should be larger than the first.

“He followed his beliefs to the stocks. As he sat there, an object of contempt and derision, I do not believe that for an instant he wavered in adhesion to his conviction. . . .

“He followed his beliefs to the dungeon, to the dungeon below the dungeon, knee-deep in unimaginable mire, where foul reptiles wound through the darkness, and deadly odors nauseated and suffocated. Still, out of the depths he cried to his God, and held to his faith.

“He followed his beliefs into exile, and, as one tradition asserts, into a violent death at the hands of the people upon whom he was pressing his convictions. He was true to his beliefs to the end.”—*Amos R. Wells.*

Derided, Yet Faithful

“Naturally of a timid and shrinking disposition, Jeremiah longed for the peace and quiet of a life of retirement, where he need not witness the continued impenitence of his beloved nation. His heart was wrung with anguish over the ruin wrought by sin. . . . Cruel were the mockings he was called upon to endure. His sensitive soul was pierced through and through by the arrows of derision hurled at him by those who despised his messages and made light of his burden for their conversion. ‘I was a derision to all my people,’ he declared, ‘and their song all the day.’ ”—*Mrs. E. G. White.*

Thirty-Fourth Week: August 20-26

- 20. Jer. 33-35: Promises and warnings.
- 21. Jer. 36-38: Imprisonment and partial release.
- 22. Jer. 39-41: Jerusalem taken; Jeremiah liberated.
- 23. Jer. 42-44: Warnings against Egypt.
- 24. Jer. 45-48: Predictions against heathen nations.
- 25. Jer. 49, 50: Predictions against heathen nations.
- 26. Jer. 51, 52: The destruction of Jerusalem.

The Book of Jeremiah

History, biography, and prophecy enter into the composition of the book of Jeremiah. The story of how at least a part of the book came to be written is quite fully told in chapter 36. Here is given an account of the writing of a roll by Baruch, who "wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah" all the messages the prophet had received from the Lord from the days of King Josiah, in whose reign Jeremiah began to prophesy. This roll was written in order that the people might hear these messages, and have an opportunity to repent, and thus escape the judgments foretold. At a great meeting at Jerusalem, called for the purpose, the roll was read. Later, by order of King Jehoiakim, it was burned—as many another message from the Lord has been burned since that day.

Jeremiah then dictated another roll to Baruch, who wrote out not only all the words of the former roll, but many additions. Canon Cook says, "There can be little doubt that the book of Jeremiah grew out of the roll which Baruch wrote down at the prophet's mouth in the fourth year of Jehoiakim."

As a whole, the book abounds in striking symbols and signs and figures of speech. Its assurances of our heavenly Father's kindness and "everlasting love," its warnings and appeals, are peculiarly applicable to the present day.

For a general survey of this book, it may be divided into four sections containing the prophecies uttered during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Gedaliah.

Thirty-Fifth Week: August 27 to September 2

- 27. Lamentations.
- 28. Ezek. 1-3: The prophet's commission.
- 29. Ezek. 4-7: Types of divine judgments.
- 30. Ezek. 8-10: The chambers of imagery.
- 31. Ezek. 11-13: Judgments and reproofs.
 - 1. Ezek. 14-17: Rejection and judgments of Jerusalem.
 - 2. Ezek. 18-20: God's justice; Israel's rebellion.

The Book of Lamentations

Like many other books of the Bible, Lamentations receives its title, in Hebrew, from the word with which it opens, "How." Our name "Lamentations" was taken from the Latin title to the book, *Lamentationes Jeremiae*. In the Septuagint, the following verse was prefixed to the book: "And it came to pass, after Israel was led into captivity, and Jerusalem laid waste, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said." Thus we have ancient authority for ascribing the authorship to Jeremiah, sometimes called "the weeping prophet."

The Lamentations is an elegiac, or mournful, poem. Further, each of the five chapters of which the book is composed "is a separate poem, complete in itself, and having a distinct subject, but brought at the same time under a plan that includes them all."

A well-defined arrangement marks the structure of this book. The first four chapters are in the acrostic form. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 each have twenty-two verses, the first verse beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second verse with the second letter, and so on. Chapter 3 has three short verses under each letter, or sixty-six verses in all,—three times the number of verses in each of the other chapters. Chapter 5 also has twenty-two verses, but without the alphabetic order.

Across the dark pages of this inspired lament flash divine rays of light from the throne of God. The Lord's mercies "are new every morning;" "His compassions fail not." To those who seek Him, and wait for Him, He is good. Not only are we to hope, but also to wait, for His salvation; for "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

Ezekiel — the Man

Ezekiel ("God strengthens"), a priest and one of the four greater prophets, was among the captives taken to Babylon with Jehoiachin, in 599 B. C., after Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Judah. With others, he was placed in the fertile valley of the Chebar, about two hundred miles north of Babylon. Here his sublime visions were given; and here also the elders of his people came to inquire of the Lord in the dark years preceding the final captivity.

Born and reared in Jerusalem, a member of a priestly house, Ezekiel prophesied a little over twenty-two years, beginning in 595 B. C. He was "distinguished by his stern and inflexible energy of will and character, and his devoted adherence to the rites and ceremonies of his national religion." Zeal for the house of God and submission to the divine will characterized his life. Jeremiah and Daniel were his contemporaries, the latter long surviving him.

The prophet was a captive in the region of Nineveh; therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had at least heard of, and perhaps seen, the great apartments of its palaces, whose walls remain to this day, covered with images and inscriptions and figures that supplement and confirm the Bible record.

On these ancient mural tablets, we find many familiar names,—Jehu, Omri, Hazael, Menahem, Hezekiah, etc., and those of various cities in Judah and Syria. Not only so, but "we discover Sennacherib's own account of his invasion of Palestine, and of the amount of tribute which King Hezekiah was forced to pay him; also pictures representing his capture of Lachish; and his officers, perhaps the railing Rabshakeh himself, presenting Jewish captives to the king."

A graphic commentary on the language of the prophet is supplied in these tablets and their cuneiform inscriptions. In these "chambers of imagery" are represented the "captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously," "horsemen riding upon horses," "the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion," "in dyed attire," etc., as well as the idols of the land.

Under the type of "the chambers of imagery," the Lord revealed to Jeremiah the secret sins of the leaders of Israel. The lesson is as applicable to many who call themselves by His

name to-day as it was to those to whom it was first spoken. In our hearts there is often a dark, secret chamber. "By our memory, and by that marvelous faculty that people call imagination, and by our desires, we are forever painting the walls of the inmost chambers of our hearts with such pictures. That is an awful power which we possess, and, alas! too often used for foul idolatries." Some day those secret chambers will be opened. Shall it not be now, when the healing, cleansing rays of the Sun of righteousness will flood the heart temple, and cast out every evil image we have painted on its walls?

Thirty-Sixth Week: September 3-9

3. Ezek. 21-23: Judgments threatened.
4. Ezek. 24-26: Parable of a boiling pot; judgments.
5. Ezek. 27-29: Doom of Tyre; promise to Israel.
6. Ezek. 30-32: Desolation and overthrow of Egypt.
7. Ezek. 33-35: God's mercy to the repentant.
8. Ezek. 36-38: Blessings of Christ's kingdom.
9. Ezek. 39-41: Victories and restoration of Israel.

The Book of Ezekiel

Ezekiel has been called "the prolongation of the voice of Jeremiah," and it is evident that the younger prophet was influenced by the messages of the elder. G. Campbell Morgan says: "His dealing with prevalent corruption was as severe as was that of Jeremiah, and his messages of judgment were equally stern. He never melted to tears as did Jeremiah, but his vision of the ultimate deliverance of the people by the triumph of Jehovah was even clearer. His vision was characterized by penetration, and perhaps the word 'through' best describes the quality of the prophecy. His messages were addressed, in the first place, to the exiles on the banks of the river Chebar; and yet it is evident that *through* them he spoke to all Israel. Moreover, he distinctly affirms, in the course of his prophecy, that the application of the truths he enunciated is to all men, so that he not only spoke *through* the exiles to Israel, but *through* Israel to men of all nationalities and of all times. He saw the prevailing conditions, the ruin of his people, the obstinacy and rebellion even among the exiles in the midst of whom he lived; but *through* all these, he saw the eternal verities as to their foundations and as to their principles."

"The Prophet of Fear and of Hope"

is the characterization given to Ezekiel by Amos R. Wells, who says:

"In some ways at least, Ezekiel was the most universal of the Hebrew prophets. In the first place, he was the first transplanted prophet, the first to preach and teach and foretell the future away from the sacred soil of the Holy Land (that is, if we except the unwilling Jonah). Intensely national as he was, yet he was also in a sense the Paul of the Old Testament, forcing the gospel of his race to bloom from an alien soil

and under foreign skies. It has been only by many such experiences, repeated through the ages, that men have come thoroughly to understand that truth for one land is truth for all lands, and that God is no respecter of nations."

Ezekiel's prophecy abounds in sublime images and lofty ideas. As we read, the mind is caught away from the low things of earth to the open heavens and the throne of God, circled with "the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain."

"One of the most important topics of the book is the subject of the Sabbath," says F. D. Starr. "The combined testimony of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel constitutes a very strong evidence for the importance and enduring nature of this institution." Isaiah testifies concerning the blessedness of the Sabbath; Jeremiah sets forth the consequences of observing it, and also of disregarding it; and Ezekiel mentions its sanctifying influence, and shows the distinction between the Sabbath and the other days of the week.

Thirty-Seventh Week: September 10-16

10. Ezek. 42-44: Divine glory; laws and ordinances.
11. Ezek. 45, 46: Ordinances of justice and worship.
12. Ezek. 47, 48: The boundaries of the land.
13. Dan. 1-3: The great image; the fiery furnace.
14. Dan. 4-6: Dream of the tree; Belshazzar's feast.
15. Dan. 7-9: Visions and their interpretation.
16. Dan. 10-12: A vision and its explanation.

The Prophet Daniel

Of peculiar interest to every Seventh-day Adventist youth is the character of Daniel—his loyalty, his temperate habits, his courage, his steadfastness. A prince of one of the royal houses of Judah, at the time when the kingdom was tottering to its fall, he found it in his heart to serve the God of his fathers; and though, during his long life, he gave his allegiance and loyal service to four kingdoms,—Judah, Babylon, Persia, and Greece,—he never deviated from the law of his God.

The following sketch of the life and times of Daniel is given to us by Elder Uriah Smith:

“Though we have a more minute account of the early life of Daniel than is recorded of any other prophet, yet his birth and lineage are left in complete obscurity, except that he was of the royal line, probably of the house of David, which had at this time become very numerous. He first appears as one of the noble captives of Judah, in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, at the commencement of the seventy years' captivity, 606 B. C. Jeremiah and Habakkuk were yet uttering their prophecies. Ezekiel commenced soon after, and a little later, Obadiah; but both these finished their work years before the close of the long and brilliant career of Daniel. . . .

“His life affords a most impressive lesson of the importance and advantage of maintaining from earliest youth strict integrity toward God, and furnishes a notable instance of a man's maintaining eminent piety and faithfully discharging all duties that pertain to the service of God, while at the same time engaging in the most stirring activities, and bearing the weightiest cares and responsibilities that can devolve upon men in this earthly life. . . .

“He is supposed to have died at Shushan, or Susa, in Persia, about the year 530 B. C., aged nearly ninety-four years,

his age being the probable reason why he returned not to Judea with other Hebrew captives, under the proclamation of Cyrus."

The source of power from which Daniel drew is open to the youth brought into trying places to-day. Mrs. E. G. White says:

"The spirit that possessed Daniel, the youth of to-day may have; they may draw from the same source of strength, possess the same power of self-control, and reveal the same grace in their lives, even under circumstances as unfavorable."

The Book of Daniel

Of even greater interest than the character and example of Daniel is the book which bears his name. Eight wonderful visions, predicting the history of the world from the prophet's day to the close of time, are given; and his authority is confirmed by Christ Himself, who quotes from one of Daniel's prophecies and calls him a prophet. A marvelous book, with understanding and eternal life in its twelve short chapters for all who study it earnestly! "It seems futile to attempt, in human language, adequately to extol the merits of this portion of divine revelation," says F. D. Starr; and Elder Uriah Smith pays it this tribute: "His prophecy is, in many respects, the most remarkable of any in the Sacred Record. It is the most comprehensive. It was the first prophecy giving a consecutive history of the world from that time to the end. It located the most of its predictions within well defined prophetic periods, though reaching many centuries into the future. It gave the first definite chronological prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. It marked the time of this event so definitely that the Jews forbid any attempt to interpret its numbers, since that prophecy shows them to have been without excuse in rejecting Christ."

The time covered by the book is seventy-two years,—the seventy years of the captivity, and two years at its close.

Outlines of Ezekiel and Daniel

This week marks the completion of the reading of the last of the major prophetic books. Take a little time to study the arrangement of the books of Ezekiel and Daniel. One plan for studying the prophecy of Ezekiel divides it into two parts:

1. Correction, Denunciation, Reproof . Chapters 1-32
2. Consolation and Promise Chapters 33-48

The book of Daniel may be outlined under three headings:

1. Introduction Chapter 1
2. History and Prophecy Chapters 2-6
3. Visions of Daniel Chapters 7-12

Make a list of the great prophetic visions recorded in this book, with titles and references. Close the book, and name them.

Thirty-Eighth Week: September 17-23

17. Hosea 1-3: Unfaithful Israel.
18. Hosea 4-8: Charges against Israel.
19. Hosea 9-11: The coming doom.
20. Hosea 12-14: Repentance and restoration.
21. Joel: The day of the Lord cometh.
22. Amos 1-4: Heathen nations condemned.
23. Amos 5-9: The doom of Israel; visions.

Hosea

The prophetic career of Hosea, the first of the minor prophets, began about 782 B. C., and covered a period of about sixty years, the reigns of the last six of the kings of Israel. Hosea was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, Joel, and Amos, and, like the latter prophet, was sent to the Israelites. It was a time of great spiritual darkness. Vice and iniquity flourished; the kings were dissolute and profligate; and the priests, lost to all sense of the sacredness of their office, introduced shameful heathen rites into God's worship.

In the vivid pages of Hosea's prophecy are given some glimpses of the conditions prevailing at that day, against which his voice was uplifted in fearless and faithful warning. Says H. T. Sell: "*Outwardly* it was a time of prosperity. The borders of the land were enlarged; Syria and Moab were conquered; commerce and trade flourished; the offerings to the temple were large. *Inwardly* the nation was decaying. . . . The great empire of Assyria was advancing to crush Israel, who, being bereft of her only hope in God by her sins, was left to her fate."

The prophecy of Hosea is the first and the longest of the twelve *minor prophetic* books. Of the style of the writer, Eichhorn says, "His discourse is like a garland, woven of a multiplicity of flowers; images are woven upon images, metaphors strung upon metaphors."

The purpose of the book "is to reveal Jehovah's loving-kindness and tender mercy to backsliding and idolatrous Israel, His everlasting faithfulness, and His unquenchable love for the sinful, the erring, and the lost." In its pages, says Dr. Morgan, "we have, first, a revelation of what sin is at its deepest and its worst; secondly, we have a revelation of the nature of

judgment, and of its inevitable activity as the result of sin; and finally, we have a revelation of the unconquerable force of love."

Jesus, Matthew, Peter, and Paul quoted from this book.

Joel, "the Prophet of the Day of the Lord"

Although of the tribe of Reuben, and therefore of the Northern Kingdom, Joel was a prophet of Judah. Because he does not mention Assyria by name among the foes of Judah, he is supposed to have lived not later than the time of King Uzziah (in the closing years of whose reign Isaiah also prophesied), and to have begun his work about the year 800 B. C. The exact time when the prophecy was given which is preserved to us in the book bearing his name is uncertain; but there is nothing indefinite in his message; it bears the stamp of absolute certainty.

Of the prophecies given by Joel concerning "the day of the Lord," G. Campbell Morgan says: "As surely as they were written, they will be fulfilled. Place Joel as late as we may, allow the latest scholar to have his way, and declare that he spoke only four centuries before Christ; it is still enough if we admit that so long before the Pentecostal miracle this man saw it, to warrant us in saying that none has the right to deny that the things which our eyes have not seen will be seen. *So surely as Joel wrote, God will act.*"

Amos — The Man and His Message

Amos, a herdsman and fruit gardener of Tekoa, a small Judean town about twelve miles south of Jerusalem, was called to prophesy to Israel, and warn them of their impending doom. In answer to the call, he went to Bethel, where the heathen sanctuary was, and to Samaria, and fearlessly lifted up his voice against the idolatry and depravity of the chosen people as well as of the surrounding nations.

It was an unpopular message and an unwelcome one that Amos was called to deliver. Jeroboam II had "restored the coast to Israel" and recovered certain cities, and an era of prosperity and its accompanying evils followed. "The rich lived in great luxury; their houses were built of hewn stone and paneled with ivory, 'where they drank and feasted to excess amid delicate perfumes and soft strains of varied music.' But all this was obtained through violence and robbery. The

poor and needy were sold as slaves, and false weights and measures used. The judges were notoriously corrupt. To be upright was to be hated and unpopular."

On the complaint of Amaziah the priest, Amos was expelled from the kingdom, and it is supposed that he returned to his home village and there wrote out his prophecy.

The book of Amos stands third in the list of the minor prophets; but in point of time, it precedes that of Hosea. It is, says Martin Anstey, "a well-ordered whole. It begins with a sonnet of eight stanzas on the doom of the nations (chapters 1, 2). Then follow three discourses on the corruption of Israel, each beginning, 'Hear ye this word' (chapters 3-6). The doom of Israel is disclosed in a series of five visions (chapters 7:1 to 9:10), and the last five verses contain the usual Messianic conclusion." The book abounds with figures and illustrations drawn from the prophet's rustic, humble life.

Thirty-Ninth Week: September 24-30

- 24. Obadiah and Jonah.
- 25. Micah 1, 2: Judgments for national sins.
- 26. Micah 3-5: Judgments for social sins.
- 27. Micah 6, 7: Judgments and mercy.
- 28. Nahum: God's goodness; judgments against Nineveh.
- 29. Habakkuk: Judgments.
- 30. Zephaniah: Judgments and reproof.

Obadiah

Nothing more is known of this man, the fourth of the twelve minor prophets, as their writings are arranged in our Bible, than may be gathered from the brief book that bears his name; "he has hidden himself behind his prophecy." Some suppose that Obadiah prophesied after the fall of Jerusalem. As he saw the Edomites, hereditary foes of the Jews, rejoicing in the capture of their capital, and joining with the Assyrians to prevent their escape, he gave this brief prophecy to rebuke their brutality. "Among all the prophets, he is the briefest in number of words; in the grace of mysteries he is their equal."

One statement in this little book is of stupendous importance. Concerning the wicked when the reign of sin is ended, it is said, "They shall be as though they had not been." A just God decrees that the finally impenitent shall utterly perish—not suffer through unending ages. Like chaff from the summer threshing floor, like stubble remaining after the wheat has been garnered, they will be utterly consumed.

Jonah

The story of Jonah is one of the most familiar of the Old Testament narratives. The prophet was a native of Gath-hepher, a village in the eastern frontier of Zebulun, a little more than an hour's journey north of Nazareth. He was sent with a message from the Lord to the sinful Jeroboam II. 2 Kings 14: 25.

According to the marginal dates, the book of Jonah is the oldest of the prophetic writings; and the experience therein recorded is thought to have occurred about three hundred years before Daniel, in Babylon, showed his loyalty to God by praying openly, as was his custom, three times a day. It is thought

that the warning to Nineveh was given during the latter part of Elisha's life.

Jonah was sent by God to carry a message of warning to a wicked heathen city—a missionary, without the missionary spirit. A man of narrow vision, he needed just the humbling which marked every step of this experience, in order to learn the great truth that God has no favorites, that His mercy embraces the race.

While the book of Jonah does not say that the great fish which the Lord prepared to receive the prophet was a whale, it is so named in one New Testament reference to the incident. The objection has been made that a whale could not swallow a man's body. On this point, Sidney Collett, in "All About the Bible," cites the evidence of an eyewitness who declared that on one occasion in his experience "a shark fifteen feet in length was found in the stomach of a sperm whale." The same authority added that "when dying, the sperm whale always ejects the contents of its stomach," and sometimes the ejected food is thrown out in masses much larger than a man's body.

It was by this miraculous preservation of his life that Jonah became a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. The accuracy of the historical record received abundant confirmation from the lips of Jesus, who said, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Micah

Micah lived in the times of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and was a native of Moresheth, a small town about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. He was a prophet both to Israel and to Judah. Isaiah, Joel, Hosea, and Amos were his contemporaries, and each did his part in warning the people of destruction to come.

Like the prophecy of Amos, Micah's book abounds in illustrations drawn from nature: "I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits," "the best of them is as a brier," Jacob shall be "as a young lion among the flocks of sheep," etc.

The prophecy of Micah falls naturally into three divisions,—chapters 1 and 2, 3-5, and 6 and 7,—each beginning with the invocation "Hear," followed by rebukes and threatenings,

passing into reasons for the judgment in the guilt of sin, and closing with a promise of blessing.

Nahum

The personal history of this prophet is veiled in obscurity. Some suppose him to have been the son of one of the captives in Assyria; others think he was a Galilean. His prophecy, the burden of Nineveh, is dated many years after the warning delivered to that city by the reluctant Jonah. During this period Nineveh had returned to her evil ways, and become "a bloody city," "full of lies and robbery." In three distinct predictions, Nahum foretells the overthrow and scattering of Assyria.

"As a poet Nahum occupies a high place in the first rank of Hebrew literature. His style is clear and uninvolved, though pregnant and forcible; his diction sonorous and rhythmical, the words reëchoing to the sense."

Habakkuk

Nothing is known of the personal history of this prophet, but he is supposed to have been a Levite, a contemporary of Jeremiah, and to have prophesied during the reigns of Josiah and Jehoahaz. When Jerusalem was destroyed, he remained in the ruined city to mourn the sins of his people. The book begins with a prayerful lament, and ends with a joyful song of confidence and faith.

Those who neglect some of these more obscure books of the Bible are like the South Africans who lived so long above the diamond fields of Kimberley. A priceless treasure is right at hand, but they neglect to make the necessary effort to obtain it. From the prophecy of Habakkuk the apostle Paul received his great watchword, "*The just shall live by faith;*" and it is said that Benjamin Franklin once stirred a company of skeptics to great enthusiasm by "an ancient poem" which he read to them,—the third chapter of this book. Read this chapter in the Revised Version, and note its lofty style, its vivid imagery, and its triumphant faith.

"What is the final word of Habakkuk's message for us?" asks Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, and he answers the question in the prophet's own words: "*Though it [the vision] tarry, wait for it.*" Does that seem an easy thing to do? I ask the question, and would give you time to think. Have you never

discovered that waiting is the hardest of all work? 'Wait.' It is a great word. How shall I wait? On the watchtower, telling God everything, and listening to God. When Habakkuk looked at his circumstances, he was perplexed. When he waited for God, and listened to God, he sang."

Zephaniah

This prophet traces his ancestry, in the first verse of his book, to Hizkiah, supposed to be the well-known Hezekiah, thirteenth king of Judah. Zephaniah lived about the same time as Habakkuk, and prophesied in the beginning of Josiah's reign. "The day of the Lord" is the great theme of his book. His description of the day of judgment and wrath "is unsurpassed in its fierce terrors, as his description of the blessings of the divine presence in the restored Jerusalem (Zeph. 3: 16, 17) is unequaled in its gentleness and beauty. Zephaniah is a compendium of all prophecy. He singles out and enforces the main central truths of all prophecy, omitting local details and temporal agencies, and filling his canvas with an awe-inspiring picture of the presence of the divine Judge Himself."

The book is characterized by "the unity and harmony of its composition, the grace, energy, and dignity of its style, and the rapid and effective alternations of threats and promises." It "reflects as in a mirror the character of the times," denounces the iniquity of the age, urges reform, and closes with "the glorious sunlight of God's mercy bursting forth from behind the clouds."

Fortieth Week: October 1-7

1. Haggai: Build the house.
2. Zech. 1-4: The Branch; not by might nor by power.
3. Zech. 5-8: Restoration of Jerusalem.
4. Zech. 9-11: Prophecies of Christ; promises of victory.
5. Zech. 12-14: A fountain for sin.
6. Malachi: Acceptable offerings.
7. General review of the Old Testament. As far as you can, give a one-name title to each book; as, Genesis, "Beginnings;" Leviticus, "Law;" Psalms, "Praise." Note that the Old Testament contains thirty-nine books, divided into five parts—law, history, poetry, major prophets, minor prophets. There are five books of law, twelve of history, five of poetry, five major prophetic books, and twelve minor prophetic books. Review the twelve minor prophets, and outline them.

Haggai

The prophetic messages of this short book were given during a period of four months in the year 520 B. C., the second year of Darius Hystaspes. For sixteen years forty-two thousand returned exiles had been living in Jerusalem; but under the persecutions of the Samaritans, and also because of their desire for temporal gain, the enthusiasm with which they had begun the work of rebuilding the temple had waned, and for fourteen years it had lain neglected.

"Consider your ways. Build the house," was the pointed message which Haggai was commissioned to give to his recreant countrymen; and Zechariah added his voice in encouragement and exhortation. A message of encouragement was also sent to Zerubbabel, the valiant son of the governor of Judah, who led the people in their response to this call.

By some, Haggai is thought to have been born in Babylon. Others suppose, from his reference to the glory of the first house, that he was among the aged exiles who wept when the foundations of the new temple were laid. Ezra 3: 12. He was the tenth of the minor prophets, and the first after the exile.

"Haggai helps us to see the perils of the hour when everything looks dark; and to understand the duty of the man of faith in such an hour, and in the presence of such perils."

Zechariah

Closely associated with the aged Haggai was the younger prophet Zechariah, born in Babylon, and returning with the first company of exiles to Jerusalem. "Both prophets had the same great object before them; both directed all their energies to the building of the same temple." The enthusiasm of the people was reawakened; and under the courageous leadership of the elders, the house was finished in the sixth year of Darius.

The book of Zechariah consists of three parts. In chapters 1-6 are nine visions of the glory of the kingdom and the worship of the Messiah; chapters 7 and 8 describe the acceptable fast; and the remainder of the book sets forth the future and final glory of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ. Many allusions are made to the first advent, and the book is frequently referred to in the New Testament. This prophecy, so full of "good words and comfortable words," is of great consolation and hope to the child of God.

"Zechariah's prophecies of Christ are, in some respects, the most remarkable in the Old Testament. In one of his visions, the Father summons the sword to awake against the Shepherd, and against the Man that is His fellow; in another, men are looking in agony on the Lord whom they have pierced; in a third, Messiah rides on an ass into Jerusalem as a conqueror; and in a fourth, He is king of all the earth, and on the very bells of the horses there is inscribed 'Holiness unto the Lord.' The divine as well as the human nature of Christ, and His office as an atoning Saviour, were thus very distinctly made known."

Malachi

Malachi, meaning "my messenger," the twelfth and last of the minor prophets, is sometimes called "the seal." With his book the Old Testament Scriptures close, and for four hundred years the Bible ended with Malachi. Little is known, but a great deal is conjectured, about this prophet. It seems certain, however, that he prophesied after Haggai and Zechariah. The new temple was completed, and its services were reëstablished. The sins of the people and the corruption of the priests are reproved; the obligation of tithing is clearly set forth; and the final utter destruction of the impenitent is foretold. One of the most precious texts in the book is the assurance that the Lord hears those who speak of His goodness, and has their

names inscribed in a book of remembrance. Since He so values the faulty expressions of love and gratitude from His frail human children, how often should we speak His praise!

Between the Testaments

A period of about four hundred years separates the Old Testament from the New. Silent years! for as far as we have any record, with the prophecy of Malachi the voice that had so long and so faithfully spoken to the chosen people ceased. The old era was ending; the darkness that precedes the dawn settled upon Judah.

But though the voice of sacred history is silent concerning this interval, we have the records of secular history and certain writings of the Jews themselves to illuminate it. With reference to the Jews, it may be divided into six well-defined periods.—the Persian, the Alexandrian, the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Maccabean, and the Roman.

The Persian Period.—It was under Cyrus, first king of Persia, that the decree was made permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. As long as the Persian kingdom lasted (to 334 B. C.), the Jews enjoyed religious freedom and civil protection.

The Alexandrian Period.—This brief period covers the time between the years 334–323 B. C., during which Alexander the Great ruled in Asia. On his way to Persia, Alexander besieged Tyre and Gaza, and marched toward Jerusalem, with the intention of subduing it. However, he was met by the high priest; and recognizing him as one whom he had seen in a dream, he went with him in peace to Jerusalem, visited the temple, and made certain pledges of protection to the Jews. He repulsed the overtures of the Samaritans, took their chief city, and filled it with Macedonians. He founded Alexandria, in Egypt, which later became a great Jewish center.

The Egyptian Period.—Alexander died at Babylon, B. C. 323, and his kingdom was by and by divided for a time among four of his generals. Judea and Samaria lay between Egypt, ruled by Ptolemy, and Syria, ruled by Seleucus. Naturally, both Syria on the north and Egypt on the south coveted the possession of Palestine; and during many troubled years, it was a battle ground between the Syrian princes, called the Selucidæ, and the rulers of Egypt, known as the Ptolemies.

Finally Ptolemy Philopator defeated the Syrian king, Antiochus the Great, and obtained possession of Judea. But as soon as he died, Antiochus invaded Egypt, and established his cruel rule.

The fortunes of the Jews varied during the Egyptian period. Ptolemy Philadelphus founded the great library of Alexandria; and during his friendly reign, the celebrated Grecian translation of the Old Testament Scriptures, known as the Septuagint, was made. Ptolemy Philopator, after defeating the Syrian king, attempted to enter the most holy place of the temple in Jerusalem, and when he was hindered, took a bloody revenge on the Jews.

The Syrian Period.—This covered approximately the years 204 to 165 B. C. It has been called “the valley of the shadow of death” for Israel. “The entire period was an almost uninterrupted martyrdom,” but it reached its height under Antiochus Epiphanes, who is well called “the Nero of Jewish history.” He persecuted the Jews, razed the walls of Jerusalem, and wantonly defiled the temple, by sacrificing swine and other unclean beasts.

The Maccabean Period.—Persecution usually defeats its own ends, and such was the case with the Greco-Syrian kings. Here and there in Israel were men who would not worship the pagan gods, nor in any way compromise the faith of their fathers. An aged priest, Matthias, and his five sons, organized a revolt. When Matthias died, his Judas Maccabeus became leader. In three campaigns, Antiochus tried to stamp out the rebellion, but failed; at his death, Judas became governor of Jerusalem, and gradually the rule of the Maccabean priest-princes was established. It was a period of comparative peace. In time Judea freed herself from the Grecian yoke, the temple erected by the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim was destroyed, and the land of Edom was conquered. The Maccabean Period lasted a little more than a hundred years — from 165 to 63 B. C.

The Roman Period.—Judea passed under the sway of Rome B. C. 63, when the Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem, and did what Ptolemy Philopator had sought to do long before — entered the holy of holies in the temple. Later, through the influence of Antony, Herod the Great, a descendant of Esau, secured the crown of Judea, and under his iron hand the line of the Maccabean princes came to an end.

The Apocrypha

While the voice of prophecy was not heard in Judea during the long period of four hundred years which marked the closing of the old dispensation, "the old literary instinct of the Jews asserted itself," and many writings were produced. Some of these contain a great deal of foolishness; others are valued as a history of the period.

Fourteen of these books, having the following titles, are known as the Apocrypha: First and Second Esdras, Tobit, Judith, portions of Esther not found in the Hebrew or Aramaic originals, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Song of the Three Holy Children, The History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, and First and Second Maccabees.

The name "Apocrypha" is a Greek word meaning "hidden," or "secret," and was given these books because their authorship is unknown. The date of their writing is also a matter of doubt, though it is generally placed between the years 200 and 100 B. C. While these apocryphal books are found in the oldest copies of the Septuagint in existence, it is generally agreed that they were not included when the first Greek translation was made, and indeed were not added till between A. D. 300 and 400. Sidney Collett says: "Although there are in the New Testament about 263 direct quotations from, and about 370 allusions to, passages in the Old Testament, yet amongst all these there is not a single reference, either by Christ or His apostles, to the apocryphal writings."

In 1546 the famous Council of Trent (which condemned the leading doctrines of the Reformation) declared the Apocrypha to be "canonical and authoritative," and it is included in the Bibles used by the Roman Catholics. However, the fact that the Roman Catholic Church so recently deemed it necessary to make such a decree "is sufficient proof in itself that even up to that time these apocryphal books, although they had doubtless been included in some versions of the Bible for many years, had not been really *acknowledged* as forming part of the true word of God."

The Master's Words

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." Luke 21:33.

*They have not passed away. The ages lie
In myriad heaps of ashes, cold and gray,
Upon the moorlands, stretching far away
Into the past, where, gaunt against the sky,
A cross once stood and raised its arms on high.
Gone is the cross, and likewise gone are they
Who saw the Master lifted up that day
To perish, that the world might never die,
But have eternal life. Caiaphas lies
To sleep his last, and Herod's bones are dust.
Judea's memory is a thing of rust,
Which time shall sweep away. The arching skies
Themselves shall pass, the earth itself decay;
But Christ's sweet words shall never pass away.*
— Selected.

Forty-First Week: October 8-14

- 8. Matt. 1-4: Genealogy; birth; baptism; temptation.
- 9. Matt. 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount.
- 10. Matt. 8-10: Miracles; commission to the twelve.
- 11. Matt. 11-13: Jesus teaches and preaches; prophetic parables.
- 12. Matt. 14-16: John beheaded; faith commended.
- 13. Matt. 17-20: The transfiguration; parables.
- 14. Matt. 21-23: Triumphal entry; parables.

The Life of Jesus

“It pleased God to have the earthly history of our divine Redeemer written by four different men, two of whom belonged to the inner circle of companionship of our Lord — Matthew and John, who were numbered among the chosen twelve; and two of whom, Mark and Luke, were ardent believers, though not numbered among the twelve apostles. Thus we have two witnesses from within and two from without that distinguished band, all bearing united testimony to the same great facts concerning our Lord.”— *Starr*.

Matthew — Apostle and Evangelist

Matthew, the author of the first Gospel, was a Galilean Jew; he looked at Jesus' life through Jewish eyes; his message was, first of all, to the Jewish people. His home was at Capernaum, and his business was that of a small tax collector under the Roman government. He appears to have been a man of wealth. By the calling of Matthew, the busy collector of dues and customs from travelers and cargoes crossing the Sea of Galilee, or passing through Capernaum on the great Damascus road which ran along the shore, we are shown that “Christ did not call idle men to work in His vineyard.”

While it is true that Matthew was a Jew, his occupation made him at once despised and feared by his countrymen, always restless under the rule of Rome. As a tax collector, he would be likely to be close-fisted, hard-headed, and an adept at driving shrewd bargains. The seat of “the receipt of custom” was no place for a man of warm human sympathies. “The tax collector for the Romans had to make many an exorbitant gain — for himself, his overlord, the emperor, and the empire.”

Yet it was Levi, the publican, whom the Lord called to join the little group of men who were to be so closely associated with Him during His earthly ministry. Still more, he was to be one of those who would place on record some of the incidents of that matchless life.

Why did Jesus choose Matthew? Mrs. E. G. White says that "He looked below the surface, and read the heart. His divine eye saw in Matthew one whom He could use for the establishment of His church." Matthew had heard of Jesus from the crowds that passed and repassed his money table. He knew the time was near for the Messiah to appear; and as he pondered and weighed the prophecies, and compared them with what he had heard concerning the Son of Joseph, he was favorably impressed. The day came when Jesus, passing that way, stopped before Matthew, and spoke directly to him: "Follow Me." Matthew's own record of that epochal moment is very brief. He says nothing about "forsaking all;" but simply, "He arose, and followed Him."

The Book of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew, like Mark's and Luke's, is called "synoptical," because it gives the reader a more or less connected view of the Saviour's life. This, the earliest of the Gospels, was probably written at Jerusalem, between A. D. 50 and A. D. 65, in the Greek language. Some have thought that it may have been written at a still earlier date in Aramaic, the language of Palestine; but this is uncertain. The great object of the book was to show to the Jews that the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah met their complete and perfect fulfillment in Christ. There are said to be as many as sixty-five references in this Gospel to the Old Testament Scriptures; in fact, the key to the book is found in the phrase, "that it might be fulfilled."

For Further Study

Note the references to the Old Testament, and make a list of them.

Study the geography covered by this book, especially that of the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding country.

Make a list of the miracles and parables recorded by Matthew.

Suggested Outline

The book may be outlined under three heads:

1. Birth and Early Youth of Jesus....Chapters 1, 2
2. Ministry in GalileeChapters 3-18
3. In Judea and JerusalemChapters 19-28

Forty-Second Week: October 15-21

15. Matt. 24-26: Christ's great prophecy; Gethsemane.
16. Matt. 27, 28: Crucifixion and resurrection.
17. Mark 1-3: John's ministry; baptism of Jesus; miracles.
18. Mark 4-6: Parables and miracles.
19. Mark 7-10: Pharisees reproved; miracles; transfiguration.
20. Mark 11-13: Triumphal entry; parables; prophecy.
21. Mark 14-16: Passover; crucifixion; resurrection.

Mark — the Man and His Book

"John, whose surname was Mark," had a Jewish-Roman name, "John" being Hebrew, and "Marcus" Roman. He lived in Jerusalem with his godly mother, a certain Mary, who seems to have been a person of means and influence among the early Christians. We find her house mentioned in Acts 12:12 as a meeting place in a time of danger and perplexity. Peter went there after his miraculous deliverance from prison.

Barnabas, the fellow laborer of Paul, was cousin to Mark, who accompanied the two elder men as their "minister," on the first great missionary journey. Later, Mark was with Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome; and still later, with Peter in Babylon. After this, Paul, during his second imprisonment, wrote to Timothy at Ephesus, and asked him to bring Mark with him to Rome. "For," said Paul, "he is profitable to me for the ministry."

From the fact that Peter refers to Mark as "Marcus my son," it is inferred that the young man was converted under the ministry of this ardent disciple, who thus became his spiritual father. By many, Peter is supposed to have superintended the writing of Mark's Gospel, which is one "of rapid movement and many graphic touches, impetuous as Peter himself."

Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four accounts of the Saviour's earthly life; and by some it is thought to be "by far the most vivid and dramatic in its narratives." The words "are full of charm and color, the movement of events is energetic and active." Mark is said to be a "true evangelical historian, relating facts more than discourses, in a concise, simple, rapid style, with occasional minute and graphic details."

Matthew wrote especially for the Jews, but Mark for the Gentiles. "The frequent explanations of Jewish terms, the

omission of reference to Jewish law and of Christ's genealogy, and the use of several Latin words, all point to the purpose of the book to aid the Gentiles, and favor the tradition that it was written at Rome and for the Romans." One peculiarity of Mark's style is his frequent use of the Greek word translated "straightway," "immediately," etc.

The date of the writing of Mark's Gospel is not certainly known, but it must have been before the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in A. D. 70.

For Further Study

Read the Bible dictionary (art. "Herod") to get a clear idea of the Herods of the New Testament.

Write the names of the twelve apostles.

Study the geography of Nazareth, Capernaum, Jericho, Jerusalem, and the temple. Note the visits of Jesus to these places.

Make a list of Jesus' references to, and His work on, the Sabbath.

Suggested Outline

Outline the book of Mark under the following topics:

1. Introduction Chapter 1: 1-13
2. The Kingdom of God Proclaimed in Galilee
..... Chapters 1: 14 to 9: 50
3. The Kingdom of God Proclaimed in Judea .. Chapter 10
4. The Triumphant King Chapters 11-13
5. The Suffering King Chapters 14, 15
6. The Victorious King and Risen Lord Chapter 16

Forty-Third Week: October 22-28

- 22. Luke 1-3: The child Jesus; preaching of John.
- 23. Luke 4-6: The temptation; miracles; parables.
- 24. Luke 7-9: Miracles and parables
- 25. Luke 10-12: The seventy sent out.
- 26. Luke 13-17: Parables; discourses; miracles.
- 27. Luke 18-21: Miracles and parables.
- 28. Luke 22-24: Last days of ministry; crucifixion; resurrection.

Luke — Physician and Friend

Very little of the personal history of Dr. Luke, as we should call him if he were alive to-day, is known to us. Only three references to him by name are found in the New Testament, all these from the pen of Paul, with whom he was closely associated. His name appears in a list of the apostle's fellow laborers; once he is called "Luke, the beloved physician," which shows him to have been sympathetic and kind; and again, when Paul was in chains in Rome, we read, "Only Luke is with me"—not only beloved, but *faithful*. Luke's fidelity as a friend is shown, too, in his anxiety that the Gentile nobleman Theophilus should have an accurate and faithful account of the life and ministry of Jesus, in order that he might be convinced of the divinity of Christ.

The frequent use of the pronoun "we" in certain parts of Acts shows that Luke, the writer of that book, shared many of Paul's missionary experiences. Luke's writings contain "the least possible reference to himself; yet we cannot doubt that he was eminently useful to the early church by his learning, judgment, fidelity, and even his medical skill."

The Gospel According to Luke

It is a mistake not to read the preface to any book, especially if it is written by the author himself. The preface to Luke's Gospel is very enlightening. From it we learn that many persons had "taken in hand to draw up a narrative" concerning certain matters which had recently been fulfilled. Luke was a Gentile Christian. He had not had the privilege of seeing Jesus' miracles and listening to His instruction; but he studied the records prepared by those who had been eyewitnesses of the life of Christ, tracing "the course of all things accurately from

the first," and set out to write an orderly account of what he recognized as the supreme event of the ages.

Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Jews, who believed in the true God and were looking for a fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Messiah.

Mark — perhaps the son of a Jewish mother and a Roman father, since his name is both Jewish and Roman — wrote primarily to convince the Romans of the divinity of Christ.

Luke wrote for the Greeks, who took pride in their humanity and broadmindedness. They humanized countless natural objects, peopled the earth with various imaginary creatures, and deified man, exalting his vices equally with his virtues. Luke presents Christ as the "ideally perfect man," and shows how not only man but all the forces of nature are obedient to His will. He is the Saviour of all mankind. "This is the most complete Gospel. In this Gospel, women appear most often. It preserves for us a number of most beautiful hymns. It uses many words peculiar to Luke, which serve to bind together the Gospel and the Acts, and prove them to be by one author."

Luke's Gospel was probably written between A. D. 60 and 70. Many authorities believe that it was written in A. D. 63.

For Further Study

Compare the Gospel of Mark with that of Luke, noting differences.

Make a list of miracles found only in Luke.

Add to your list of references on proper Sabbath observance.

Suggested Outline

Outline Luke's Gospel under the following topics:

1. Preface Chapter 1: 1-4
2. Advent of the Saviour of the World
..... Chapters 1: 5 to 4: 13
3. His Work for the Gentile World... Chapters 4: 14 to 9: 50
4. His Work for the Jewish World... Chapters 9: 51 to 18: 30
5. His Death for All the World... Chapters 18: 31 to 23: 56
6. His Resurrection and Ascension as Saviour of All the
World Chapter 24

Forty-Fourth Week: October 29 to November 4

- 29. John 1-3: Jesus' baptism; water made wine.
- 30. John 4-6: The woman of Samaria; miracles.
- 31. John 7-9: In the temple; blind man healed.
 - 1. John 10-12: The Good Shepherd; entry into Jerusalem.
 - 2. John 13-15: The last supper.
 - 3. John 16, 17: Words of comfort and farewell.
 - 4. John 18-21: Betrayal; crucifixion; resurrection.

John the Beloved

John not only held, with Peter and James, a place in the innermost circle of Jesus' friends, but he is also distinguished among the twelve as the disciple whom Jesus loved. If we stop to think why he is thus honored, we must conclude that it was because of his sincere and abiding love for his Lord. This love led him to understand the deep spiritual truths taught by Jesus; it carried him "into the palace of the high priest" with Jesus when all the other disciples fled, even Peter standing "at the door without;" it lent wings to his feet after the nights of waiting, bringing him first to the empty tomb on the resurrection morning; and it rent asunder the mists of doubt and sorrow by the Sea of Galilee, and led him to exclaim, "It is the Lord!" Wonderful changes came into the life of John because of his love for Jesus.

Like his father Zebedee and his brother James, John was a Galilean fisherman. He was of Bethsaida, but was often at Capernaum, the busy commercial center of that populous district. He was one of the first of the twelve to leave his daily occupation to follow Jesus.

The picture presented of John in the Scriptures "has a peculiar charm, so much peace, humility, charity, and brotherly love glow in it. His affectionate, meditative, spiritual character had also the elements of vigor and decision. Though amiable, he was firm and fearless." John was present at the scene of the Saviour's crucifixion, which he describes minutely, with all the vividness of an eyewitness; and after the ascension, he faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed the gospel, in the face of imprisonment, torture, even death itself.

The Gospel According to John

This Gospel is of later date than the others, having been written while the disciple was living at Ephesus, presumably

between A. D. 80 and A. D. 90. Others give the date as 98 A. D.,—nearly thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem. His purpose in writing is clearly set forth by the apostle himself. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples," which are not recorded here, he says. "But these are written, that *ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*"

John's Gospel is called "the Gospel for the church," those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, have accepted Jesus as their Saviour. "They had attained to a new life, with different aims, duties, and aspirations; they were seeking the everlasting life of glory with Christ, of which this new life was the beginning."

John's Gospel seems to assume that those who read will be familiar with the history and many of the details of Jesus' life. The accounts of His birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, and ascension are omitted, together with the Sermon on the Mount and the prophetic discourses. So also all the parables found in the other Gospels. Six miracles, five of which are found only in this Gospel, are given. About two thirds of the whole book describes events of the last six months of the Master's life, and one third is taken to record the history of the last weeks. John's Gospel "is rich in noble discourses, and above all in the wonderful final discourse of his Master."

It was by the inspired pen of the beloved disciple, who dwelt so often on the subject of love, that the golden text of the gospel was given to mankind—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This text has been the theme of thousands of sermons, the comfort of countless aching hearts, the assurance of unnumbered dying saints, and the hope of who shall say how many repenting sinners. Martin Luther called it "the gospel in a nutshell;" another declares it to be "the best thing ever put in human words;" and still another likens it to "infinite riches in a little room."

If You Have Time

Make a six-question study on each of the following subjects: Baptism, Sabbath Keeping, The Last Days, Christ's Second Coming. Use texts found in the four Gospels.

Suggested Outline

Outline John's Gospel under the following titles:

1. Introduction Chapter 1: 1-18
2. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World
..... Chapters 1: 19 to 12: 50
3. Jesus Reveals Himself to His Disciples... Chapters 13-17
4. Jesus Crucified and Raised to Life..... Chapters 18-21

Forty-Fifth Week: November 5-11

5. Acts 1, 2: Jesus' ascension; Pentecost.
6. Acts 3-5: Preaching; power; deliverance.
7. Acts 6, 7: Defense and death of Stephen.
8. Acts 8, 9: From persecutor to persecuted.
9. Acts 10-12: The gospel to the Gentiles; persecution.
10. Acts 13-15: The first gospel missionaries.
11. Acts 16-18: Paul at Athens and Corinth.

The Book of Acts

This book, the fifth of the New Testament, is a record of the early diffusion of the gospel. Two men—Peter, one of the twelve, and Paul, a converted Pharisee—had a prominent part in beginning this great work; and the narrative may be properly divided into two parts, the first dealing more particularly with the deeds of Peter, and the second with those of Paul. Instead of the title "*The Acts of the Apostles*," the book is called in the Greek, "*Acts of Apostles*."

The Acts was written by Luke, and by him inscribed to the same Theophilus for whose enlightenment his Gospel, referred to as "the former treatise," was written. It was probably written with no other thought on the part of Luke than simply to give to his friend a true account, without elaboration or embellishment, of a very interesting sequence of events. This fact gives an added charm to the book.

Luke was himself an eyewitness of many of the incidents recorded. He was, moreover, well versed in recent Jewish history, and familiar with all the events connected with the great gospel movement which, after Pentecost, swept over the world. It was fitting that one having a "perfect understanding" of all these facts, and a gifted pen for setting them down in order, should "gather up the four strands of the Gospels, and braid them into one narrative," without which our knowledge of the early apostolic church would be fragmentary indeed.

Luke was the friend and associate of Paul—perhaps also his physician. At all events, he was with the apostle in Rome, and it is supposed that he wrote the Acts there, about two years after Paul's arrival in the imperial city, as recorded in Acts 28: 30.

"The style of this book is very forcible, fresh, and graphic; the events are narrated in a clear and dignified manner; and

the peculiarities of each speaker are well preserved." Notice the description of the day of Pentecost, with the natural amazement of the foreign multitudes at Jerusalem, and the timely sermon of Peter; the organization of the early church; the sermon and martyrdom of Stephen; the conversion of Saul and the vision of Peter; the narration of the incidents leading up to the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles; the imprisonment and deliverance of Peter; the changeableness of the populace at Lystra; the song in prison and succeeding events; the discourse at Athens; the tumult at Ephesus; and the vivid recital of the various changes and experiences in the apostle's journey to Rome.

An intelligent reading of the Acts presupposes a knowledge of the geography of the countries mentioned, and some familiarity with the history of the period and the manners and customs of the peoples described. A good Bible dictionary will be a great help in clearing up obscure or unfamiliar details.

The history covered in Acts occupied about thirty-three years. Four Roman emperors — Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero — reigned during this period.

Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles

Saul, afterward called Paul, was born at Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilicia. It was distinguished for its culture in letters and philosophy, being at one time the rival of Athens and Alexandria.

Paul was a Jew, well born, of the tribe of Benjamin; and along with his good social position, he received from his father his Roman citizenship. Though in an alien city, surrounded by the seducing influences of heathenism, and subjected to the allurements of pagan culture and philosophy, Paul was carefully instructed in the religion of his fathers. He was, to use his telling phrase, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews."

Paul's father was a Pharisee, and according to the strict rules and laws of this dominant party of the Jews was the young man brought up. "At a suitable age he was sent to Jerusalem to complete his education in the school of Gamaliel, the most distinguished rabbi of that age. It does not appear that he was in Jerusalem during the ministry of Christ; and it was perhaps after his return to Tarsus that he learned the art of tent making, in accordance with the general practice

among the Jews, and their maxim, 'He that does not teach his son a useful handicraft teaches him to steal.' "

Besides being the possessor of a liberal education according to rabbinical standards, Paul seems to have been a master of the Greek language, and familiar with its literature. But all this, with all worldly honor and position, he gladly counted loss for the cause of Christ. He seems to have been the first "to regard Christianity in its true light, as a universal religion. While others were for Judaizing all those who embraced the new religion, by imposing on them the yoke of Mosaic observances, it was Paul's endeavor to break down the middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, and show them that they were all 'one in Christ.' "

It was the dissolute Nero, relentless persecutor of the early Christians, who, says Mrs. E. G. White, "pronounced the decision that condemned Paul to a martyr's death. Inasmuch as a Roman citizen could not be condemned to torture, he was sentenced to be beheaded. . . . Few spectators were allowed to be present; for his persecutors, alarmed at the extent of his influence, feared that converts might be won to Christianity by the scenes of his death. But even the hardened soldiers who attended him, listened to his words, and with amazement saw him cheerful and even joyous in the presence of death."

Paul was a world-man — a scholar, an author, a philosopher, an orator, the first and greatest gospel missionary, and a matchless leader of men. Yet he took for his guiding motto four monosyllables, "One thing I do." He lived it; he died for it; and his example of singleness of purpose will be an inspiration as long as men shall study his life.

Forty-Sixth Week: November 12-18

12. Acts 19-21: Paul at Ephesus; farewell; at Jerusalem.
13. Acts 22, 23: Defense before the Jews; conspiracy.
14. Acts 24-26: Defense before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa.
15. Acts 27, 28: The journey to Rome.
16. Rom. 1-4: Justification by faith.
17. Rom. 5-7: Reconciliation; the wages of sin.
18. Rom. 8-10: Divine grace; righteousness by faith.

Introduction to the Epistles

Twenty-one of the twenty-seven books which compose the New Testament are in the form of letters, written by five men. If the book of Hebrews is included in the list, fourteen of these letters were written by Paul; John wrote three; Peter wrote two; and James and Jude one each. The unquestioned Pauline epistles are, Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

It has been said that "the foundation of Christianity is laid in a narrative, but the first and greatest development of Christian theology is laid in a collection of letters." Of the value of these writings, Mr. H. T. Sell says:

"We gain from this kind of literature a very vivid impression of the condition of the early churches. We look directly into their troubles, their joys, their customs and doctrines. We have a clearer impression of how matters actually were then than we could probably get from a formal treatise or carefully prepared book. The interest in some of the questions discussed has passed away; but the principles remain, and the doctrinal value is unquestioned. Here is the record of a great battle fought and won for the cause of Christ. 'These epistles touch with clearness and certainty on the very highest truths of human aspiration and action.' "

The Epistles of Paul

The epistles of Paul may be divided into four groups for topical study:

1. The Second Advent Epistles: First and Second Thessalonians. These were written during the second missionary journey,—First Thessalonians at Corinth, A. D. 52; and Second Thessalonians, A. D. 53, probably from the same city.

2. Doctrinal and "Anti-Judaic" Epistles: First Corinthians, 57 A. D., at Ephesus; Second Corinthians, 57 A. D., probably at Philippi; Galatians and Romans, 58 A. D., at Corinth. These were written during the third missionary journey, to refute certain errors, and to set forth great Christian doctrines.

3. The Imprisonment Epistles, written during the first imprisonment of the apostle in Rome: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians, about 62 to 63 A. D.

4. The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus. First Timothy and Titus were written about 64 A. D., probably in Macedonia; Second Timothy was written in Rome, about 66 A. D. These were the epistles of Paul's latest years, written to workers who had been closely associated with him. They deal mainly with the duties of a Christian pastor.

The Epistle to the Romans

Without, so far as is known, the ministry of the living preacher, a company of believers in the Christian religion had been raised up at Rome. This might have been accomplished through the conversion of some of the "strangers of Rome," both "Jews and proselytes," who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; or the gospel seed might have been carried to that stronghold of paganism by some of the believers who were scattered abroad as the result of the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen.

Paul, always seeing and feeling the needs of the distant fields, had it in mind to visit these believers, and carry the gospel light to them. In carrying out this purpose, he was for a time hindered; but in A. D. 58, while at Corinth, he improved the opportunity to send a letter to these brethren by the hand of Phebe, a deaconess in a neighboring church.

In such a mixed company, so far removed from Christian counsel and instruction, errors would naturally come in, and many perplexing questions arise. It was Paul's purpose to present in this letter "the great principles of the gospel. He stated his position on the questions which were agitating the Jewish and Gentile churches, and showed that the hopes and promises which had once belonged especially to the Jews were now offered to the Gentiles also. With great clearness and power the apostle presented the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. He hoped that other churches might also be helped by the instruction sent to the Christians at Rome, but how dimly could he

foresee the far-reaching influence of his words! Through all the ages, the great truth of justification by faith has stood as a mighty beacon to guide repentant sinners into the way of life. . . . For the epistle to the church at Rome every Christian has reason to thank God.”

For Further Study

Learn what you can about Herod, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Outline Paul's three missionary journeys,—(a) with Barnabas and John Mark; (b) with Silas; (c) with Timothy; also the incidents of his arrest and trial, and the voyage to Rome.

Suggested Outline

The book of Acts may be outlined in five parts, thus:

1. The Jerusalem Period Chapters 1-7
2. The Palestinian Period Chapters 8-12
3. The Asia Minor Period Chapters 13-15: 35
4. The Grecian Period Chapters 15: 36 to 20
5. The Roman Period Chapters 21-28

Fill in subordinate titles, with references. For instance, under the fifth topic the following may be given:

- Before Felix Chapters 23: 31 to 24: 27
- Before Festus Chapter 25: 1-12
- Before Agrippa Chapters 25: 13 to 26: 32
- Aboard the Adramyttium Ship Chapter 27: 1-5
- Aboard the Alexandrian Ship Chapter 27: 6-44
- On the Island of Malta Chapter 28: 1-10
- Aboard the Castor and Pollux Chapter 28: 11-14
- At Rome Chapter 28: 15-31

Such an outline of the whole book will bring its contents before you at a glance, and will be invaluable in fixing them in mind.

Forty-Seventh Week: November 19-25

19. Rom. 11-13: Counsel to believers.
20. Rom. 14-16: Forbearance; kindness; benediction.
21. 1 Cor. 1-4: Faithfulness of God; the sure foundation.
22. 1 Cor. 5-7: "Ye are bought with a price."
23. 1 Cor. 8-10: Paul's objective in service.
24. 1 Cor. 11-13: The Lord's Supper; "love never faileth."
25. 1 Cor. 14-16: Spiritual gifts; the resurrection.

Corinth

This rich, populous, and cosmopolitan city was situated about forty miles west of Athens, on an isthmus separating the Ionian and the Ægean Sea. With its favorable geographical location, and its two ports, one on each sea, Corinth increased rapidly in commercial and military importance, and proportionately also in the luxuries and vices that too often follow an abundance of this world's goods.

In Paul's day, Corinth was one of the most important cities not only in Greece, but in the world. Through its gates surged the traffic of the east. To this great distributing center came merchants from the ends of the earth, seeking a market for their wares; pleasure lovers were lured thither by the call of the city's wealth and charm; and the idle and vicious of many lands, drawn then as now to any place where their hopes for personal gain by questionable means may be most easily satisfied, found in this splendid metropolis a rich field for their exploitation. "Here was held a perpetual Vanity Fair. The vices of the east and the west met and clasped hands in the work of human degradation."

An unusual and remarkable feature of Corinth was the Acrocorinthus, a great mass of rock rising abruptly to a height of two thousand feet. A town is said to have been once built on the summit of this natural citadel.

The Church in Corinth

Corinth, "corrupt and contented," with its pleasure-loving population of heathen Greeks and Romans, bitterly prejudiced Jews, and indifferent travelers, might have been looked upon by many as a difficult field for sowing the gospel seed. But Paul,

with the faith and fervor of a true soldier of the cross, visiting the city in A. D. 52, on his second missionary journey, saw in it an opportunity for profitable labor. For a year and a half he preached the word of life to Jews and Gentiles in Corinth, supporting himself meanwhile by working at his trade of tent making. Silas and Timothy visited Paul here, and faithfully lent their aid to his efforts to plant the standard of the cross in this influential city. Success attended their labors. Many were converted, among them the chief ruler of the synagogue, with all his house; and a church was organized. Later, when Paul had gone to Ephesus, Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, "mighty in the Scriptures," visited Corinth, and encouraged and instructed the believers.

First Corinthians

Apollos, who labored for the church at Corinth after Paul's departure, was a learned and eloquent man. Against his will, and greatly to his sorrow, some of the believers began to exalt him and his labors unduly. Others thought they were best showing their love and loyalty to Paul by giving him first place in their affections and regard. Still others exalted Peter's position. Divisions came in, and soon the church was about to split into factions. Some were saying, boldly, "I am of Apollos;" and others, "I am of Paul;" still others declared, "I am of Cephas [Peter];" and others, sensing the danger of exalting man, but not knowing how to stem the tide so strongly setting in, said, "I am of Christ." Thus the unity and harmony that should have prevailed, and that were so essential, were destroyed. The church was rent by bitter dissension and strife, and the work of the gospel was accordingly hindered. "Pride, idolatry, and sensualism were steadily increasing among those who had once been zealous in the Christian life."

Word of this sad condition was brought to Paul at Ephesus, by members of the influential family of Chloe, and also by a letter from the church itself, asking advice. The apostle's response to this situation was the epistle, so rich in Christian advice and counsel, so eloquent and persuasive and compelling, which bears the name "The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians." It was written at Ephesus, toward the close of Paul's stay of nearly three years in that city, about A. D. 57, five years after the establishment of the church at Corinth.

Suggested Outline

Outline the book of Romans, under its two great divisions:

1. Practical Chapters 1-11
2. Doctrinal Chapters 12-16

The following outline is suggested for 1 Corinthians:

1. Salutation Chapter 1: 1-9
2. Divisions in the Church Chapters 1: 10 to 6: 20
3. Directions Concerning Moral Evils Chapters 7-10
4. Practical Instruction Chapters 11-16

Forty-Eighth Week: November 26 to December 2

- 26. 2 Cor. 1-4: Forgiveness; living epistles.
- 27. 2 Cor. 5-7: Paul's motive in service; godly sorrow.
- 28. 2 Cor. 8-10: Liberality.
- 29. 2 Cor. 11-13: Suffering for Christ.
- 30. Gal. 1-3: Law and works.
 - 1. Gal. 4-6: Adoption; fruits of the Spirit.
 - 2. Eph. 1-3: God's eternal purpose.

Second Corinthians

After writing his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul left Ephesus and went to Macedonia, probably to Philippi. Here, though he was "troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears," he welcomed Titus with first-hand news from the church at Corinth. In general his first letter had been well received, and Paul's very human anxiety over sending it was allayed. Almost, in those anxious months, he had repented sending it; now, when he learned that their sorrow was of the godly sort that works repentance, he rejoiced.

However, not all the members of the church had acknowledged the justice of the rebuke administered; some were more bitter than ever, even denying Paul's authority as an apostle.

It was therefore to comfort the believers and to defend his authority against his enemies, that Paul wrote this second letter (probably from Philippi, A. D. 57), and sent it to the church by the hand of Titus. It has been called a "magnificent picture" of the apostle's strenuous life. Mrs. E. G. White says:

"Paul was now full of faith and hope. He felt that Satan was not to triumph over the work of God in Corinth, and in words of praise he poured forth the gratitude of his heart. He and his fellow laborers would celebrate their victory over the enemies of Christ and the truth by going forth with new zeal to extend the knowledge of the Saviour. Like incense, the fragrance of the gospel was to be diffused throughout the world."

The Epistle to the Galatians

On his second missionary journey, while detained by sickness in the Roman province of Galatia, Paul had raised up a number of churches. About 280 B. C. this territory was settled by fugitive Gauls, driven out of Italy and Greece; and their descendants, with a mingling of Greeks, Romans, and Jews, formed the

population in Paul's day. The people, perhaps owing to the influence of their Gallic ancestry, are described as "susceptible of quick impressions and sudden changes, with a fickleness equal to their courage and enthusiasm, and a constant liability to that disunion which is the fruit of excessive vanity."

A few years after Paul's visit certain Jewish teachers who professed Christianity visited the Galatian churches, and introduced false doctrines among them. They ignored the decisions of the church council held a few years before in Jerusalem, and urged the Galatian Christians to enforce certain ceremonies that they held as essential. The believers not being thoroughly grounded in the truth, and having little tenacity of purpose, a critical situation arose among them, which threatened to disrupt the churches.

It was this situation, word of which reached Paul, probably while he was in Corinth, that led him to write with his own hand the earnest, fatherly letter to the Galatians. "He indignantly rebukes his children in Christ for their sudden alienation from him and from the truth; vindicates his authority and his teachings as an apostle, by showing that he received them from Christ Himself; and forcibly presents the great doctrine of Christianity — justification by faith — with its relations to the law on the one hand and to holy living on the other."

It seems evident that this letter was a great blessing to the Galatian believers, and that they accepted the saving truths Paul so clearly sets forth. For nine hundred years the churches of Galatia were mentioned in ecclesiastical history.

"Since the days of Luther," says Meyer, "the epistle to the Galatians has always been held in high esteem as the gospel's banner of freedom. To it and the epistle to the Romans we owe most directly the springing up and development of the ideas and energies of the Reformation."

The Epistle to the Ephesians

The city of Ephesus, situated about forty miles from Smyrna, was chiefly celebrated for its splendid temple to the goddess Diana, regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world, and its immense theater, said to be the largest ever built by the Greeks. A thriving business in the manufacture of small portable shrines to the goddess had been built up, as well as in the preparation and sale of books of magic. During Paul's labors in Ephesus at one time, the believers brought to him their

supply of these books, and burned them in a public place. "And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver," or thirty thousand dollars.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written during the time of his first imprisonment at Rome, about A. D. 63, and sent to his friends at Ephesus by Tychicus, "a beloved brother." From the fact that there are no personal greetings in this letter, and because of its general character, some suppose that it may have been sent to various churches, as well as to the believers at Ephesus. "It is an epistle of general exhortation and counsel, especially fitted to those that had lately come from heathenism, and were still exposed to its temptations."

Forty-Ninth Week: December 3-9

3. Eph. 4-6: Unity; holiness; love; etc.
4. Philippians: Fruits of righteousness.
5. Colossians: Divine headship of Christ.
6. 1 Thessalonians: The second advent.
7. 2 Thessalonians: Apostasy; consuming destruction.
8. 1 Timothy: Advice to a young minister.
9. 2 Timothy: Endurance; crown of reward.

The Epistle to the Philippians

Philippi, the chief city of eastern Macedonia, was named for Philip II, of Macedon, who wrested it from Thrace about 358 B. C., and made of it a fortified garrison. In 42 B. C. it came under the control of Rome. The emperor Augustus "transported Roman citizens to Philippi, and made it a 'colony,'—a miniature Rome, where Roman laws, customs, and language prevailed."

In answer to a divine call, Paul, in company with Silas, visited Philippi about A. D. 51 or 52, and through their ministry the first church in Europe was established there. In later years Paul twice visited this church. It is thought the second letter to the believers at Corinth was written at Philippi.

Paul's letter to the Philippians, like that to the Ephesians and the Colossians, was written at Rome during his first imprisonment, A. D. 62 or 63. It was especially called forth by the thoughtful love of the Philippian brethren, who had sent Epaphroditus to Rome with gifts for the apostle's support.

The epistle is remarkable for the love and joy that permeate it. "Rejoice" is its key-word. The Philippian Christians are reminded that even persecution may "fall out for the furtherance of the gospel," and that those whose "citizenship is in heaven" should be happy, temperate, and trustful. The letter teaches us "that outward circumstances need not affect the joy of Christian experience. As to circumstances, Paul was Nero's prisoner; as to inner experience, he was the happiest man on earth. The epistle is a shout of joy, of triumph."

The name "Christ" occurs forty-two times in this short letter, besides many pronouns referring to Him. It has been well said that "Paul cannot write anything without writing about Christ."

First Thessalonians

Thessalonica, a prosperous and populous seaport city of Macedonia, was anciently called *Therma*, from the hot springs in its vicinity. Cassander, who rebuilt the city about 315 B. C., renamed it *Thessalonica*, in honor of his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great. It is now known as *Saloniki*.

In Paul's day the population was made up of Jews, Greeks, and Romans. Because of its favorable location, "on the sea margin of a vast plain, watered by numerous rivers, halfway between the Adriatic and the Hellespont, at the entrance of the pass into the Macedonian plains, with a constant tide of traffic ebbing and flowing,—abroad by sea and inland by the two arms of Roman road,—it was a fit center of evangelization, as from thence 'sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.' "

With Silas and Timothy, Paul visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey; and a flourishing church, noted for its ardent hope in the soon return of the Lord Jesus, was raised up. Obligated to flee from the city because of persecution by the unbelieving Jews, Paul went to Corinth, where he stayed a year and a half. Here, a few months after leaving the new church in Thessalonica, the apostle addressed to them his earliest letter, in A. D. 52. In it he recounted the circumstances of his stay among them, expressed his joy in the good report that had been brought to him by Timothy concerning the believers, and took occasion to clear up in their minds certain truths concerning the state of the dead and the second advent.

Second Thessalonians

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonian believers was written from Corinth not long after the first. Some had failed to understand his teaching in regard to the second coming of Christ, and the excitement and unrest in the church over this question were increasing.

"In his second letter Paul sought to correct their misunderstanding of his teaching, and to set before them his true position. He again expressed his confidence in their integrity, and his gratitude that their faith was strong, and that their love abounded for one another and for the cause of their Master. He told them that he presented them to other churches as an example of the patient, persevering faith that bravely with-

stands persecution and tribulation; and he carried their minds forward to the time of the second coming of Christ."

Clearly he outlined the history of the mystery of lawlessness, whose evil work of opposition and persecution would continue through long ages before the second advent. "The Thessalonian believers had hoped for immediate deliverance; now they were admonished to take up bravely and in the fear of God the work before them. The apostle charged them not to neglect their duties nor resign themselves to idle waiting. After their glowing anticipations of immediate deliverance, the round of daily life and the opposition that they must meet would appear doubly forbidding. He therefore exhorted them to steadfastness in the faith."

First Timothy

To Lystra, in Lycaonia, Paul and Barnabas fled from the persecution of Iconium during the apostle's first missionary journey, in A. D. 45. "And there they preached the gospel." Among their hearers was the youthful Timothy, son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, who was destined to become, in later years, so closely associated with the great apostle to the Gentiles. Under the ministry of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, Timothy was converted. Here, too, he gained an insight into the persecution and suffering that attended those who gave their lives in that age to the preaching of the gospel.

Seven years later, during the course of Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy was chosen to be his companion in labor and travel. "Paul saw that Timothy was faithful, steadfast, and true. . . . Timothy was a mere youth when he was chosen by God to be a teacher; but his principles had been so established by his early education that he was fitted to take his place as Paul's helper." From this time till the end of Paul's life, Timothy was closely associated with him, either sharing his journeys and ministry, or remaining at some station with new believers, to build them up in the faith.

Timothy shared Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, and later accompanied him to Asia Minor, and was placed in charge of the church at Ephesus. It was in this city that the great temple of Diana was located; and here this idolatrous system of worship had its stronghold. The believers must be constantly instructed, the depressing influence of heathenism resisted, and errors and heresies guarded against. Timothy's position was a difficult

one, and he would surely appreciate Paul's letter of counsel and instruction. The epistle was written about A. D. 64.

Second Timothy

A peculiar interest attaches to this, Paul's last letter, written at Rome, in the prison cell from which he was to be led forth to a martyr's death. Timothy had been left in charge of the church at Ephesus, a position calling for great faith, tact, and insight. While Paul longed to see the young man whom he calls "my dearly beloved son," he realized that even under favorable conditions, considerable time must elapse before the younger man could reach Rome from Ephesus. Even then he might not find Paul alive. So, though urging Timothy to come to Rome with all haste, Paul took occasion to write in this last letter such tender farewells, with such timely instruction and earnest admonition to the gospel minister, as would be the greatest help to Timothy in the event of his not reaching Rome in time to receive Paul's parting words in person.

Fiftieth Week: December 10-16

10. Titus: Church order and discipline.
11. Philemon: Justice and mercy.
12. Heb. 1-3: Divinity, power, and majesty of Christ.
13. Heb. 4-6: Our merciful and faithful High Priest.
14. Heb. 7-9: Melchisedec and Christ; the old and the new.
15. Heb. 10, 11: Christ's atonement; faith illustrated.
16. Heb. 12, 13: "Looking unto Jesus."

Titus

Titus was a Gentile Christian. Paul affectionately calls him "mine own son after the common faith," so it is concluded that he was one of Paul's converts from heathenism. Like Timothy, too, he received his training from Paul, and became his warm, personal friend and faithful companion.

The first mention of Titus by name occurs in Gal. 2:3, though he is undoubtedly referred to at an earlier date, in Acts 15:2, as being a member of the delegation sent from Antioch to Jerusalem to discuss the question of circumcision.

Titus was a faithful under-shepherd, and was invaluable to Paul, by whom he was sent at least three times to Corinth to instruct the believers, to establish them in certain observances, and to deal with various matters of church discipline. Later, when Paul's first imprisonment was ended, Titus accompanied him to the island of Crete. When Paul went away, he left Titus to "set in order the things that are wanting, and appoint elders in every city." The estimate placed by Paul upon the faithfulness and capability of Titus appears in his second letter to the church at Corinth. "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you."

It was while Titus was in charge of the believers in Crete, probably about A. D. 64, that Paul sent him the letter which bears his name. The epistle sets a high standard for the gospel minister, warns against "Jewish fables and commandments of men," emphasizes the need of "sound doctrine," and enjoins submission to authority,—as servants, to their masters; as believers, to the church; and as citizens, to their rulers. Note the beautiful allusion to the second coming of Christ.

Because they deal so largely with the duties and responsibilities of pastors, the two epistles to Timothy and the epistle to Titus are called the Pastoral Epistles.

Philemon

This brief epistle, regarded by many as the most beautiful of Paul's letters, and the only one which is of a strictly personal and private nature, was written near the close of the apostle's first imprisonment at Rome, to Philemon; a Christian of Colosse. This believer appears to have been a man of wealth and influence. His home was the meeting place of the believers, and his hospitality and liberality were a cause of rejoicing on the part of Paul, who calls him his "fellow laborer," and refers to his son as "our fellow soldier."

But a little cloud had arisen to shadow this Christian home. Onesimus, a valued slave, had run away to Rome, perhaps with some of his master's goods. Here he met Paul, and was genuinely converted. The apostle persuaded Onesimus to return to Philemon, and receive whatever punishment might be meted out to him. By his hand Paul sent the epistle to the Colossian believers, and this short letter to Philemon, in which he beseeches grace in behalf of "my son Onesimus."

The epistle is "remarkable for its delicacy, generosity, and justice." While acknowledging that Onesimus, though under the liberty of the gospel, is still the slave of Philemon, Paul suggests that he be received "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." This is according to the spirit of the gospel. The principle here expressed would naturally undermine the whole system of servitude.

"For love's sake," is the golden phrase of this brief letter. We cannot read it too often.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The authorship of the book of Hebrews is a question on which authorities disagree. By many, Paul is held to be the author, and Luke the writer, of this epistle. It is believed by some that Paul composed the book during a period of strict imprisonment, and afterward dictated it to Luke. The chief reason for ascribing this letter to other authorship is that in the thirteen other epistles credited to Paul, he tells at the very beginning who he is; as, "Paul, a servant," "Paul, an apostle," etc. Then, too, the author of the book of Hebrews places himself among those who heard the gospel from others to whom the Lord revealed it (Heb. 2: 3); but Paul says, in Gal. 1: 12, that he did not receive the gospel from men, neither

was he taught it, but it came to him "by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The epistle to the Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem, probably about 63 A. D.

But whoever the author, it was written "to the Hebrews," presumably to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine. Some of them seem to have been discouraged, and in danger of giving up the unpopular faith which, in the first enthusiasm of the gospel movement, they had accepted. In taking upon them the name of Christ, they had renounced much that was precious to them, much that was inbred in their very lives. It was hard to turn away from the ritual which they had so long been taught to revere, difficult to realize that the glorious temple at Jerusalem was no longer the dwelling place of Jehovah. The power of Pentecost faded from their memory; the jibes and jeers and persecution to which they were subjected were hard to bear. Doubts crept into their minds. What if, after all, they had made a mistake?

This epistle was designed to comfort these disheartened Christians, and to strengthen them to endure. The writer exalts Christ, and shows that He is the substance to which the whole Levitical service pointed forward. He is our sacrifice for sins, and also our great High Priest, who ministers in the heavenly sanctuary—"the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

While the letter "to the Hebrews" had a local application, it was also designed by the Holy Spirit to comfort and encourage all those who have lived since that time, and especially those who live in the great day of atonement, and are looking for the soon return of the Lord Jesus. We, like the early Jewish believers, are urged to cast not away our confidence; we must be patient, we must walk by faith, and not be of those who draw back. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Earnest exhortations to faithful endurance, comforting promises, and a beautiful prayer, are found in the closing chapters.

If You Have Time

Add names of other Old Testament heroes of faith to the list given in Hebrews 11.

Make a list of the different Jameses mentioned in the New Testament, and study the facts given about each.

Suggested Outline

Write a brief outline of the book of Hebrews, under the following heads:

1. Christ Above All Chapters 1-10: 18
2. Reasons for Steadfastness Chapters 10: 19 to 13: 16
3. Conclusion Chapter 13: 17-25

Fifty-First Week: December 17-23

17. James: Patience; faith; wisdom; evil speaking; prayer.
18. 1 Peter: Strength and patience under trial.
19. 2 Peter: Faithfulness to the divine Word.
20. 1 John: Propitiation; sonship; obedience; victory.
21. 2 John; 3 John; Jude.
22. Rev. 1-3: Salutation; messages to the seven churches.
23. Rev. 4-6: Vision of the throne; six seals opened.

The Epistle of James

Two of the twelve apostles were named James,—James the son of Alphæus, or Cleopas, and James the son of Zebedee. The former is known as James the Less, perhaps because he was younger or of less stature than the latter, who was put to death by Herod Agrippa I, in A. D. 44. (See Acts 12: 1, 2.) But the author of the epistle was James the Just, who is spoken of by Paul as “the Lord’s brother.” He rose to a position of prominence in the early church, and at the famous Jerusalem council we find him presiding, as he pronounced the sentence on the question under discussion. According to tradition, he was thrown down from the temple by the scribes and Pharisees; he was then stoned, and his brains were dashed out with a fuller’s club.

The epistle of James was written for all the Christian Jews, those scattered abroad as well as those at Jerusalem. Its purpose was to warn them against certain errors that had arisen in regard to the doctrine of justification by faith; to encourage them to show their devotion to Christ by kindness to the poor, loving their neighbors, obeying the law, and avoiding criticism and evil speaking; and to warn the ungodly to repent. Note especially the directions given concerning the sick.

This beautiful epistle is applicable to every age, but above all to those who live in the time when “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” The grace of *endurance* is especially urged. “The epistle is remarkable for its eminently practical nature, the homeliness and aptness of its illustrations, and the bold, plain-spoken rebukes of the oppressors of the poor.”

First Peter

Simon Peter, a fisherman of Bethsaida, was called to his apostleship early in Jesus’ ministry. His whole subsequent history is an example of what the grace of God can do in subdu-

ing the natural heart, and in working through human instruments to bring men to a knowledge of salvation. Under Peter's ministry, by the blessing of God, 3,000 persons were converted on the day of Pentecost, and by him the first Gentile family was baptized and admitted to the household of faith. He preached the gospel to the Jews scattered throughout the various countries of Asia Minor, and it is thought that he suffered martyrdom at Rome about the same time as the apostle Paul. "All agree that he was crucified. Origen says that Peter felt himself to be unworthy to be put to death in the same manner as his Master, and was therefore, at his own request, crucified with his head downward."

The first epistle of Peter is thought to have been written at Babylon, about 64 A.D., in the reign of the emperor Nero. It was addressed to the Jewish Christians of Asia Minor,— "strangers" in the lands in which they were living,— and was written to encourage and strengthen them in a time of severe persecution. They were urged to live lives of practical godliness, warned against special temptations, and reminded that those who suffer for the name of Christ should not be ashamed but rejoice.

Second Peter

"This is emphatically a last-day message, culminating in a most vivid and glowing description of the day of the Lord, in which the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up," says F. D. Starr. A noteworthy feature of the letter is Peter's commendation of "our beloved brother Paul" and his writings. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul had recorded some things about Peter. It would have been natural for the old Peter to resent this rebuke from one less long a disciple of Jesus than himself; yet the converted Peter showed no disposition to retaliate or criticize. Self and its hurts were lost sight of in the great work given into his hands by his departing Lord—"Feed My lambs," "Feed My sheep."

Peter's second letter is thought to have been written about A. D. 64, either at Rome, or while the apostle was on the way thither. Its purpose is, as he himself tells us, to bring to their minds certain truths which they have already learned, in order that their faith may be established. They are urged to progress in Christian experience, to make their "calling and election sure," to take heed to the word of prophecy, and to beware of apostasy.

The First, Second, and Third Epistles of John

This little group of letters, "the most independent of place and time and circumstance of all the writings of the New Testament," has been called "a kind of mirror, in which one sees the charming spirit of the apostle John." For it is generally held that he is their author, many authorities agreeing that First John may be regarded as an appendix to the fourth Gospel.

The purpose of the writing of this epistle is thus given by the apostle: "That you may *know*, . . . and that ye may *believe*." The divinity of Christ is strongly affirmed, and the believers are urged to show their love for Him in their everyday service. "Love one another," is the burden of the letter, which is supposed to have been written at Ephesus, near the end of the first century.

The second and third epistles of John are "all we have left of the private correspondence of the apostle." Like the First Epistle, they are thought to have been written at Ephesus, near the close of his long life. The second letter is addressed to the "elect lady and her children," but whether a person or a church was meant by this designation is unknown. The letter is a friendly talk "about a visit the apostle has recently made; he commends the children of the lady who are walking in the truth; he points out the necessity of love and obedience to Christ, and utters a warning against false teachers; he closes with the expressed hope of making another visit soon. There is much in common here with the first and third epistles."

The Third Epistle of John is addressed to "the well beloved Gaius;" but aside from what the letter itself tells, we know nothing of him. Evidently he had shown kindness to some visiting brethren, who, in their travels, brought word to John of his hospitality. The apostle had written to the church concerning their coming; but one of the members, Diotrephes, had fomented such a feeling against them that they were not received. The kindness of Gaius was in marked contrast to the treatment accorded the visiting evangelists by this influential member and his sympathizers. On their return to Ephesus, John sent this letter to Gaius, commending his course, and declaring his intention of himself coming thither, and talking matters over with his friend "face to face."

Jude

This brief but important epistle is usually attributed to the Jude who was the brother of Jesus, and also the brother of the James who wrote the epistle bearing that name. Probably Jude "is addressing the same audience that James addressed,—the depressed Jewish Christians, whom he urges to hold fast to the faith in spite of false teachers and many temptations."

The letter mentions Adam, Cain, Enoch, Moses, Korah, and Balaam, together with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the deliverance from Egypt, thus indorsing the Old Testament record of these persons and events. The vital subjects of translation and resurrection are introduced; Enoch's beautiful prophecy of the second advent is here alone preserved to us; the believers are exhorted to keep themselves in the love of God, and to work for others; and finally "glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever," are attributed to Him who "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." This brief letter abounds in beautiful figures of speech, used not to decorate but to emphasize the great truths presented.

For Further Study

Arrange the Pauline epistles and the general epistles according to their probable chronological order.

Locate the isle of Patmos, and study its geography.

Fifty-Second Week: December 24-31

24. Rev. 7-9: 144,000 sealed; the seventh seal; six trumpets sounded.
25. Rev. 10, 11: The little book; seventh trumpet sounded.
26. Rev. 12-14: The dragon; the beast; the three angels' messages.
27. Rev. 15-17: The seven last plagues; etc.
28. Rev. 18, 19: Babylon is fallen; marriage of the Lamb.
29. Rev. 20-22: The Judgment; New Jerusalem; "I come quickly."
30. Review the New Testament, noting that it contains 4 Gospels, 1 historical book, 14 Pauline epistles, 7 general epistles, and 1 book of prophecy — 27 books in all.
31. Take this time for a general review of the whole Bible, book by book. Taking each in its turn, ask yourself,
(1) by whom it was written; (2) its great object;
(3) the leading truths, or events, or persons described therein.

The Revelation

If one book could be called more important than another in the whole canon of Scripture, surely it would be "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." It is the Revelation; not the hidden, the secret, the mystery. Its purpose is to show forth, not to obscure. In the original Greek it is called the Apocalypse, which means "the removal of the veil; the unveiling." In the face of all this, it is surprising to find this book often referred to as "sealed;" but the Lord Himself, knowing that this very thing would be said, gave this instruction to His servant: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

Of the book of Revelation, Elder Uriah Smith says: "Scenes of glory surpassing fable are unveiled before us in this book. Appeals of unwonted power bear down upon the impenitent from its sacred pages in threatenings of judgment that have no parallel in any other portion of the Book of God. Consolation which no language can describe is here given to the humble followers of Christ. . . . No other book takes us at once and so irresistibly into another sphere. Long vistas are here opened before us, which are bounded by no terrestrial objects, but carry us forward into other worlds. And if ever themes of

thrilling and impressive interest, and grand and lofty imagery, and sublime and magnificent description, can invite the attention of mankind, then the Revelation invites us to a careful study of its pages, which urge upon our notice the realities of a momentous future and an unseen world."

John, the beloved disciple, and the writer of the Gospel and the epistles that bear his name, was "the penman employed by Christ to write out this Revelation for the benefit of His church." It was written while John, who had miraculously escaped martyrdom, was banished by the emperor Domitian to the isle of Patmos, a barren and rocky island in the Ægean Sea. From this inhospitable, lonely spot, "where Domitian thought he had forever extinguished at least one torch of truth, there arose the most magnificent revelation of all the sacred canon, to shed forth its divine luster over the whole Christian world till the end of time."

Of John's exile on Patmos, Mrs. E. G. White says: "To the servant of God this gloomy abode became the gate of heaven. Here, shut away from the busy scenes of life, and from the active labors of former years, he had the companionship of God and Christ and the heavenly angels, and from them he received instruction for the church for all future time. The events that would take place in the closing scenes of this earth's history were outlined before him; and there he wrote out the visions he received from God. When his voice could no longer testify to the One whom he loved and served, the messages given him on that barren coast were to go forth as a lamp that burneth, declaring the sure purpose of the Lord concerning every nation on the earth."

Outline of Revelation

This is a difficult book to outline. One plan is to divide it into five parts, as follows:

1. Introduction Chapters 1-3
2. First Series of Visions Chapters 4-11
3. Second Series of Visions Chapters 12-16
4. Visions of Judgments Chapters 17-20
5. New Heaven and New Earth Chapters 21, 22

Study this general outline, and if you have time fill in subordinate titles and references. A careful study of the book in this way will enable you to master its contents more thoroughly than in any other. And to know what is in the book is a great help when studying its special message.

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